BBC

MENDELSSOHN'S 'ITALIAN' SYMPHONY
Bask in the Mediterranean sun with the composer's most uplifting work

THE TERROR OF *JAWS*
50 years of a blood-curdling film score

music

The world's best-selling classical music magazine

BBC Radio 3
Full June listings inside
See p100

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE
AWARDS 2025
IN ASSOCIATION WITH CRUISE COLLECTIVE

Yunchan Lim

The thrilling young pianist scoops an unprecedented hat-trick of awards!

Anna Lapwood
On the music that shaped her life

Orlando Gibbons
Charles I's favourite composer

Benjamin Appl
The baritone's most hellish concert

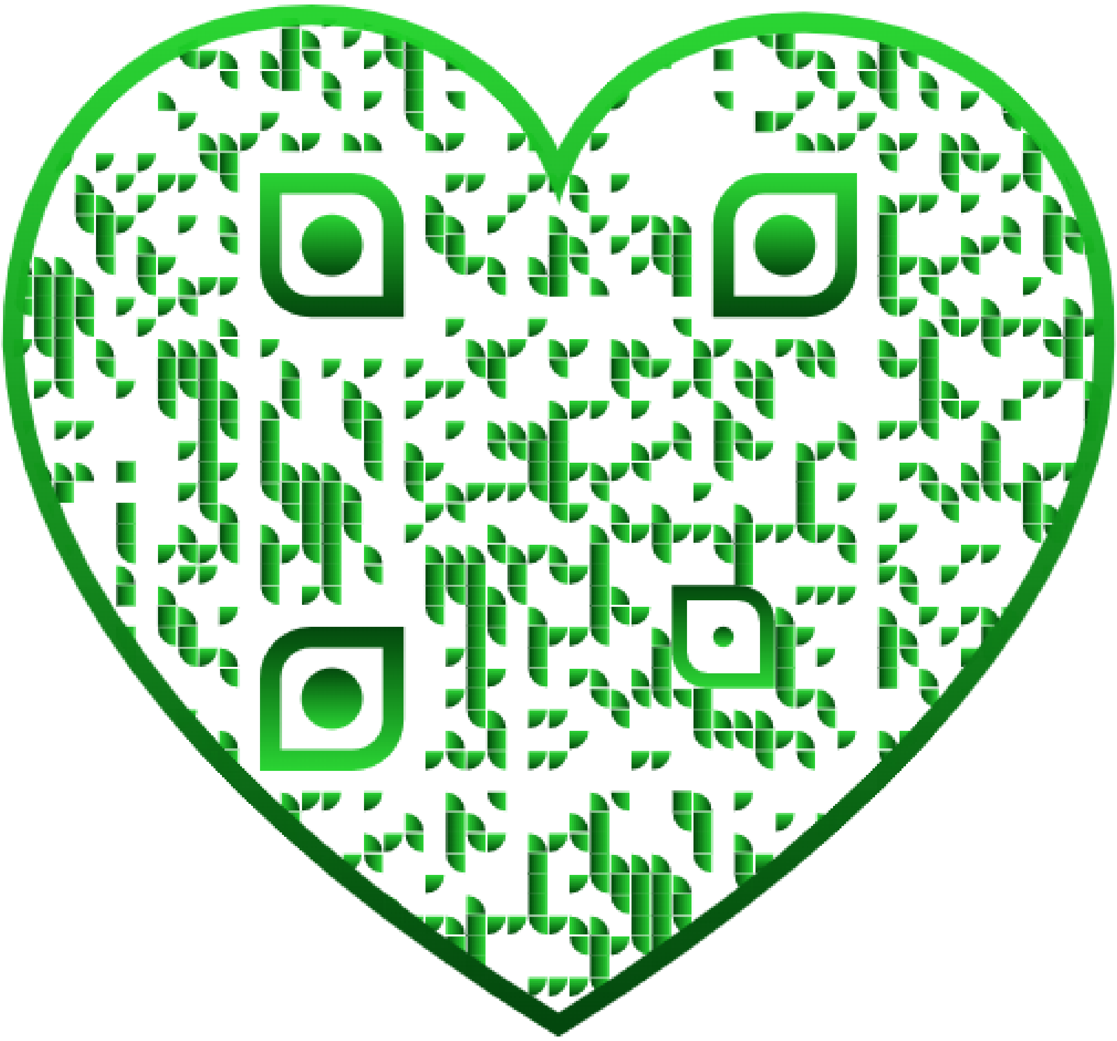
Also in this issue...

And relax... music to bring calm in a troubled world

The astonishing resurrection of the Notre-Dame organ

How Liszt's piano playing sent Brahms to sleep...

100 reviews by the world's finest critics
Recordings & books – see p72



LAWO CLASSICS
states of mind
HARPREET BANSAL

LAWO CLASSICS

LWC1413 // RELEASED APRIL 2025

States of Mind

Music by Harpreet Bansal

Harpreet Bansal violin **Vojtěch Procházka** piano **Andreas Bratlie** percussion
Cikada String Quartet

Born in Oslo to Indian parents, violinist and composer Harpreet Bansal embarked on her musical journey from the age of two with her father – himself a Guru of Indian classical music – as her teacher. She has been praised for her radical approach, fusing the traditional court music of the Mughals with jazz, folk traditions and classical music.

LAWO
HERMAN VOGT
Cello and Piano Concerto
AUDUN SANDVIK—CELLO
SVEINUNG BJELLAND—PIANO
NORWEGIAN RADIO ORCHESTRA
ANNA-MARIA HELSING—CONDUCTOR

LWC1346 // RELEASED MARCH 2025

HERMAN VOGT: CELLO AND PIANO CONCERTOS

Audun Sandvik cello
Sveinung Bjelland piano
Norwegian Radio Orchestra
Anna-Maria Helsing conductor

Much of Herman Vogt's music follows the established rubric of Classical Romanticism but dresses it in a modern yet often tonal sound, both sensitive and stringent.

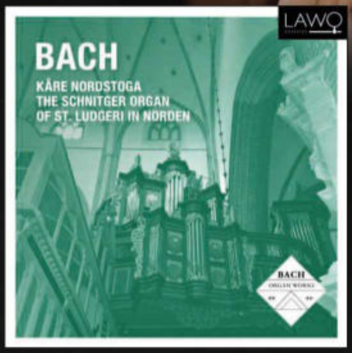
LAWO
Marcus Paus & Ole Paus
Ingenting forsvinner
Tora Augestad
NyNorsk Messingkvintett

LWC1353 // RELEASED MAY 2025

INGENTING FORSVINNER

Tora Augestad mezzo-soprano
NyNorsk Messingkvintett
(New Norwegian Brass Quintet)

Composer Marcus Paus has set to music the poetry of his father, the beloved singer-songwriter and poet Ole Paus. Modern harmonies and lyrical lines provide a compelling foundation for Ole Paus's poetic universe.


LAWO
BACH
KÅRE NORDSTOGA
THE SCHNITGER ORGAN
OF ST. LUDGERI IN NORDEN
BACH
ORGAN WORKS

LWC1368 // RELEASED MAY 2025

BACH ORGAN WORKS, ST. LUDGERI IN NORDEN

Kåre Nordstoga organ

With its resplendent sound and historical authenticity, the St. Ludgeri organ, built by Schnitger in the late 17th century, is one of the most important surviving baroque organs in Europe.

LAWO
MARTIN ROMBERG
ARTS AND SIGNS
ALEXANDRA SILOCEA
PIANO

LWC1468 // RELEASED JUNE 2025

MARTIN ROMBERG: ARTS AND SIGNS

Alexandra Silocea piano

Alexandra Silocea's interpretation of Martin Romberg's music explores the deep connection between music, symbolism and visual art, offering an immersive and ethereal listening experience.

Music Spotify amazon qobuz TIDAL IDAGIO **www.lawoclassics.com**

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES
Tel: +44 (0)117 300 8752
Email: music@classical-music.com
Post: The Editor, BBC Music Magazine,
Eagle House, Bristol BS1 4ST

SUBSCRIPTIONS & BACK ISSUES
Tel: 03330 162112; 01604 973720
Web: ourmediashop.com/contactus
Post: BBC Music Magazine,
3 Queensbridge, Northampton, NN4 7BF

Follow us on Twitter
@musicmagazine

Like us on Facebook
facebook.com/classicalmagazine

Find us online
classical-music.com

Subscribe to our podcast

Subscribe today to *BBC Music Magazine*

Save money on newsstand prices!

See p10 for our fantastic offer

HELENA COOKE

Welcome

It's not often that a single album wins BBC Music Magazine Awards in two categories – let alone that the album in question also walks away with our coveted Recording of the Year accolade. In fact, in 20 years of Awards, this is the first time that such a phenomenon has occurred. And that the artist at the centre of these three prestigious prizes should just have celebrated his 21st birthday is simply astonishing.

But South Korean pianist Yunchan Lim is no ordinary artist. From his dazzling winning performance of Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto at the 2022 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition at the age of just 18, it was clear that his was an incredibly special talent. And it's a promise that has more than been fulfilled in his debut studio album of the complete Chopin Études, described by our reviewer John Allison as 'a remarkable feat that demands to be heard'. For Lim's own take on these exceptional Chopin performances, turn to page 24 – and to discover the other 2025 Award winners, head to page 26 for interviews with every successful artist.

Elsewhere in the issue, we celebrate two very different anniversaries – the 20th of British vocal ensemble VOCES8; and the 50th of John Williams's soundtrack to *Jaws*. Both have been groundbreaking in their own way, and highlight the wonderful diversity within our classical world.

Charlotte Smith *Editor*

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

Tom Service
Writer and broadcaster

'Meeting pianist Nikolai Lugansky had the quality of encountering a musical absolute: he's someone you feel would have just as intense a relationship with music even without the trappings of career, concerts and recordings.' ***Page 36***

Claire Jackson
Editor and journalist

'When Erik Satie composed the *Gymnopédies*, he probably didn't envisage the pieces would be used to calm dogs. But I have a feeling he would be satisfied that his music, like many others, has surprising benefits.' ***Page 40***

John Allison
Editor, writer and critic

'Seeing the restored Notre-Dame has been likened to time travel, but for a one-time South African music student, who once staked out Parisian organ lofts, meeting Vincent Dubois there felt like a personal time machine.' ***Page 46***

Visit **Classical-Music.com** for the very latest from the music world

Contents

JUNE 2025

FEATURES

24 **Cover:** And the winners are...
We present the BBC Music Magazine Awards 2025, complete with interviews with the winning artists

36 Left-field learning
Nikolai Lugansky shares with *Tom Service* his unlikely route to becoming a globally acclaimed piano virtuoso

40 And relax...
Claire Jackson explores how music has been shown to bring a sense of calm; plus, our ten works to de-stress to

46 Grand Dame
As the mighty organ of Notre-Dame sounds again after the fire of 2019, *John Allison* enjoys a Parisian visit

50 Soundbites!
Charlotte Smith braves the waves to tell the story of John Williams's film score for *Jaws*, 50 years old this month

54 All in the mind
Is there really a link between mental illness and creative genius? *Rebecca Franks* delves into matters of the mind

58 Pieces of 8
We celebrate 20 years of choral ensemble VOCES8

EVERY MONTH

8 Letters

12 The Full Score
The latest news and interviews from the music world

23 Richard Morrison

62 Musical Destinations
Charlotte Smith enjoys opera in Savonlinna, Finland

64 Composer of the Month
Gibbons, voice of Stuart England, by *Simon Heighes*

68 Building a Library
Erik Levi on Mendelssohn's sunny 'Italian' Symphony

100 Radio & TV

104 Crossword and Quiz

106 Music that Changed Me
Organist and conductor Anna Lapwood

BBC RADIO 3

June Radio 3 highlights
See p100

BBC music MAGAZINE
AWARDS 202
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
CRUISE COLLECTIVE

24 BBC Music Magazine Awards 2025

COVER: JAMES HOLE THIS PAGE: MATTHEW JOHNSON, GETTY, MARCO BORGGREVE, JOHN MILLAR

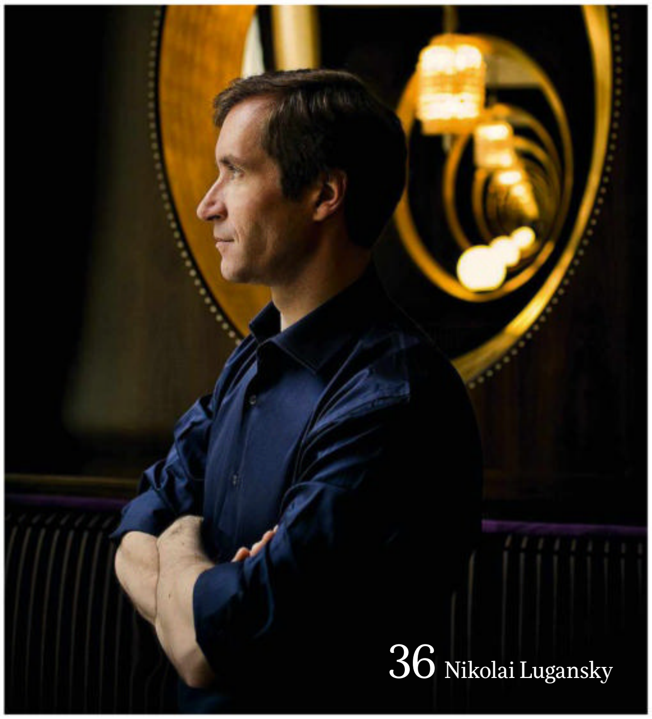
BBC music MAGAZINE

Subscriptions £64.87 (UK); £65 (Europe); £74 (Rest of World) ABC Reg No. 3122

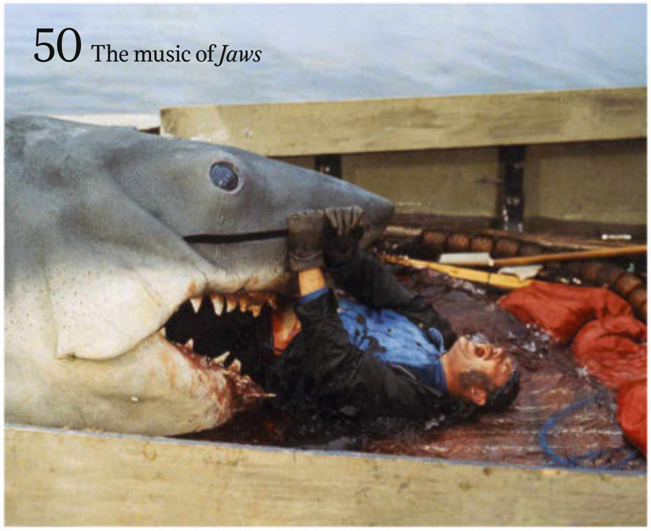
EDITORIAL
Plus the myth or legend we'd like to hear portrayed in music (see p20)
Editor Charlotte Smith
The Bunyip, from Aboriginal mythology
Deputy editor Jeremy Pound
Romulus and Remus's founding of Rome
Reviews editor Michael Beek
Goram and Vincent and the Avon Gorge
Multi-platform content producer Steve Wright
Black Shuck, the East Anglian hound
Cover CD editor Alice Pearson
The Loch Ness Monster
Art editor Dav Ludford
Ra and Eye's Destruction of Mankind
Thanks to
Jenny Price
Hannah Nepilova

MARKETING
Direct marketing manager
Kellie Lane
Subscriptions marketing coordinator
Dennis Awdziejczyk

ADVERTISING
Advertisement manager
Rebecca Janyshiwskyj
+44 (0)117 300 8547
Commercial brand leads
Rebecca Yirrell +44 (0)117 300 8811
Rebecca O'Connell +44 (0)117 300 8814
Andy Williams +44 (0)117 476 7313
Client solutions manager



36 Nikolai Lugansky



50 The music of *Jaws*

Tom Houlden +44 (0)117 300 8203
Brand representative
Marc Hay +44 (0)117 476 7394
Inserts
Laurence Robertson +353 876 902208
SYNDICATION & LICENSING
Tim Hudson
+44 (0)20 7150 5170
Richard Bentley
+44 (0)20 7150 5168
PRODUCTION
Production director
Sarah Powell
Production coordinator
Hannah Gazzard
Ad coordinator
Molly Websdell
Ad designers
Cee Pike,
Andrew Hobson

PUBLISHING
Managing director
Andrew Davies
Group managing director
Andy Marshall
Brand lead
Robert Brock
Editorial development director
Daniel Bennett
BBC STUDIOS, UK PUBLISHING
SVP Global Licensing
Stephen Davies
Global director, magazines
Mandy Thwaites
Compliance manager
Cameron McEwan

This magazine is published by
Our Media Company Bristol
Limited under licence
from BBC Studios

June reviews

Your guide to the best new recordings and books

Timothy Ridout plays
Bach, Britten, Telemann
and Caroline Shaw

72 Recording of the Month

Timothy Ridout
TELEMANN | BACH | BRITTEN | SHAW

Timothy Ridout
Viola works

'This is an album that proclaims the viola as a distinctive, individual solo instrument, ideally served here'

74 Orchestral 76 Concerto 80 Opera
82 Choral 84 Vocal 86 Chamber
90 Instrumental 94 Screen 95 Books
96 From the Archive 97 Reviews Index 98 Audio

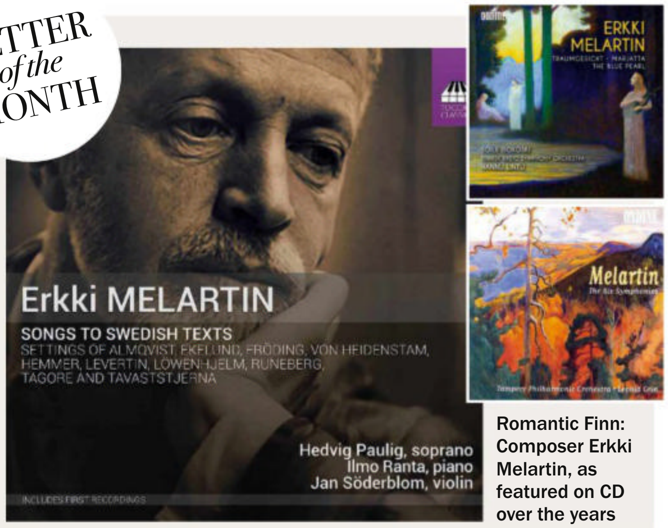
music
YUJA WANG
VE DAY
Britten
AWARDS
Yunchan Lim
VOCES8

Subscribe today to
BBC Music Magazine
Save money on
newsstand prices!
*See p10 for our
fantastic offer*

Have your say…

Write to: The editor, BBC Music Magazine, Eagle House, Bristol, BS1 4ST
Email: music@classical-music.com Social media: contact us on Facebook and X (Twitter)

LETTER of the MONTH


Erkki MELARTIN
SONGS TO SWEDISH TEXTS
SETTINGS OF ALMQVIST, EKELUND, FRÖDING, VON HEIDENSTAM, HEMMER, LEVERTIN, LÖWENHJELM, RUNEBERG, TAGORE AND TAVASTSTJERNA
Hedvig Paulig, soprano
Ilmo Ranta, piano
Jan Söderblom, violin
INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS
ERKKI MELARTIN
Melartin
The Six Symphonies

Romantic Finn: Composer Erkki Melartin, as featured on CD over the years

A fine Finnish find

The other day in Henry Bohn's, our second-hand record shop, I came across a set of the six symphonies of Erkki Melartin. Who? A symphonist ten years younger than Sibelius; 'one of Finland's most significant national Romantic composers' (Wikipedia) of the early 20th century. I took a punt and bought them. I've been a classical music fan for 50 years, and in that time I can safely say I have never seen another vinyl or CD issue of his music, nor a review of one. I've never heard a piece by him in the concert hall or on Radio 3 and would be curious to know how many times he has been mentioned in *BBC Music* in all its years. What's the story? Was he a serial abuser, a plagiarist, politically incorrect or what? 2025 is the 150th anniversary of his birth. Any chance of you doing a rehab job: an article, even a cover CD? Simply out of curiosity.

***Alex Kidson,** Liverpool*

The editor replies:
We have reviewed his music here and there over the years, but a wider look is by no means a bad idea!

WIN! £50 VOUCHER FOR PRESTO MUSIC

Every month we will award the best letter with a **£50 voucher** for **Presto Music**, the UK's leading e-commerce site for classical and jazz recordings, printed music, music books and musical instruments. Please note: the editor reserves the right to shorten letters for publication.

prestomusic

GETTY

Silence of the swans

May's issue of *BBC Music Magazine* is, as usual, full of fantastic musical information and opinions, but I'm not sure about the illustrations. The swans flying over Sibelius on page 105 would be perfect if they were illustrating John Cage's *4'33"* because they are Mute Swans! Sibelius's swans should surely be Whooper Swans, as it is their call that are evoked in the Fifth Symphony.

***Anne Abbs,** Carlisle*

The editor replies:
A fair point! In Sibelius's diary entry where he describes the sight of the swans that inspired that famous theme in the Fifth Symphony, he does specifically mention the sound they made too. We stand corrected.

Opening thoughts

To the list of memorable openings in classical music (*In the beginning...*; April), I would add two British works, both with a similar approach: firstly, Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony*; and secondly, Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*. Possibly the opening of Bach's B minor Mass might also qualify – without any preliminary orchestral Sinfonia, the entry of the Kyrie is as dramatic as it is challenging to a choir.

***W Roy Large,** Jesmond*

Quiet is best

With regard to memorable openings, may I suggest as candidates Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 1, 'Winter Daydreams', plus Finzi's Clarinet Concerto? Both are beguiling in an understated manner – a case of quiet thrills. They unexpectedly took me almost to heaven when I first heard them, and still do

***Ann Kearney,** via email*

Missing Blue

Three words: *Rhapsody in Blue*. One question: how could you forget it?

Preston Neal Jones,
Hollywood, CA, US

Tasty starters

Five of the most iconic openings? Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, Mahler's Symphony No. 5, Parry's *Jerusalem* and Handel's *Zadok the Priest*.

Revd Mark Williams,
Deeping St James

The editor replies:
Many thanks for your suggestions of classical music's most memorable openings. Quite how we managed to forget *Rhapsody in Blue* remains a mystery...

Peaky blinders

I have to chide Richard Morrison for his criterion of 'effect on me' as the ultimate measure of value in art (*Opinion*; March issue). Yes, Mendelssohn's Octet is magnificent, and I can appreciate its effect on

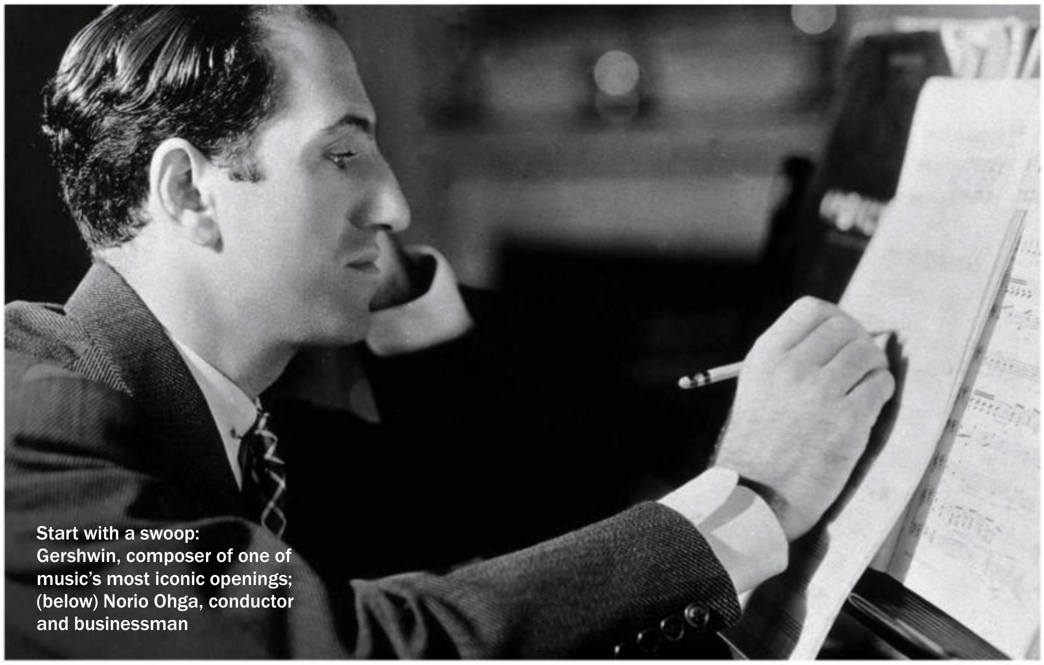
Morrison. But I think that that Mendelssohn 'peak' is personal to him. I have many friends that think that Mahler never wrote anything greater than his 'Resurrection' Second Symphony. Does that mean that he peaked at that point? If I like *The Flying Dutchman* better than the *Ring* cycle, does that really say anything about Wagner's peak? By the way, Wagner wrote that at about age 38. What could Mendelssohn have produced if he had lived beyond 38? As a physician, I don't put much stock in the Morrison theory that Mendelssohn's death was promoted by 'the weight of expectation...' There were no such expectations of Fanny Mendelssohn, who died a few months earlier than her brother. Maybe they both had strokes due to untreated hypertension.
Charles A. Amenta III,
Chicago, IL US

Keeping score

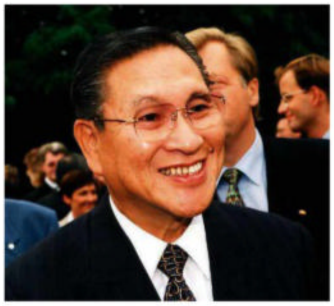
While opera singers clearly do need to memorise their roles – you can hardly wander around the stage with score in hand! – I am less convinced of the need for other performers to do so (*The art of memory*; April). I think it was Otto Klemperer who, when asked why he didn't conduct from memory like some other conductors, replied rather tartly, 'because I can read the music'.
Bruce Carlin, *via email*

Reading matter

Richard Morrison says there are many excellent books that explain how to 'listen – really listen – to music ... with our brains as well as our ears' (*Opinion*; April). Could he give us a few suggestions please?
Richard Fisher,
Trysull, Staffordshire



Start with a swoop: Gershwin, composer of one of music's most iconic openings; (below) Norio Ohga, conductor and businessman



Podium trauma

I read the feature on Simon Barere's fatal Carnegie performance (*Timepiece*; March) with great fascination. It reminded me of the collapse of Norio Ohga (whose day job was chairman of Sony until his retirement) while conducting the Tokyo Philharmonic in the Second Movement of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony during the Beijing Music Festival in 2001. Ohga had piloted his own aircraft into China and had rehearsed with the orchestra earlier that day. A doctor was summoned from the audience among whom I was sitting, and Ohga was rushed to hospital shortly afterwards and the concert resumed under the baton of Yu Long, organiser of the festival. Luckily for Ohga, he survived the cerebral haemorrhage and recovered after prolonged coma and recuperation. He continued to conduct and died ten years later, aged 81 – the same as his old friend Herbert von Karajan, who had also been a keen aviator with shrewd business sense.
Fan Wang, *Cheshire*

Hoffnung highlights

Thank you for Andrew Green's witty and nostalgic feature on the irreplaceable Gerard Hoffnung (*Sketch comedy*; March). Three wonderful gems of his stand out in my memory: the cartoon of a tuba player with a barrel of beer stuck into the bell as a mute; the harassed Austrian hotelier writing in broken English in response to an enquiry, 'There is a French widow in every bedroom'; and an excerpt from Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* at one of his Royal Festival Hall music festivals, when a massed choir, 100-piece orchestra and two brass bands came together. 'Slain!' was the result.
Christopher Morley,
Halesowen

Memorable meeting

A few years ago I was invited by Scottish Opera to a reception to mark Dame Janet Baker's lifetime support for the company. Also attending the event was Robert Sutherland, former accompanist and friend of Maria Callas. I had met Robert a few years earlier when I had organised a reunion lunch for him and a friend from his student days. Robert introduced me to Dame Janet, which was very special for me as I had been a fan since my teenage years, when I first saw her perform on a TV show call *Stars on Sunday*. We had a lovely chat about her many performances in Scotland over the years, and I was so grateful to a friend who took a photo to capture this exceptional occasion! Sadly, Robert passed away in February, aged 94.
Graham Sutherland,
Edinburgh

BBC music
MAGAZINE

FREE ONE MONTH TRIAL
to the digital edition

MENDELSSOHN'S 'ITALIAN' SYMPHONY
Bask in the Mediterranean sun with the composer's most uplifting work
THE TERROR OF JAWS
50 years of a blood-curdling film score
music
The world's best-selling classical music magazine
BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE AWARDS 2025
IN ASSOCIATION WITH CRUISE COLLECTIVE
Yunchan Lim
The thrilling young pianist scoops an unprecedented hat-trick of awards!
Full June listings inside
PALESTRINA 500 YEARS
VOCES8
Choral music from across the centuries
THE BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE COLLECTION
VOL. 33 NO. 9
Also in this issue...
And relax... music to bring calm in a troubled world
The astonishing resurrection of the Notre-Dame organ
How Liszt's piano playing sent Brahms to sleep...
100 reviews by the world's finest critics
Recordings & books – see p72
JUNE 2025
£7.99

Available from

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google play

amazon apps Available on kindle fire

BBC Music Magazine is a must-read for anyone with a passion for classical music. Every issue brings the world of classical music to life, from interviews with the greatest artists and features on fascinating subjects, to all the latest news and opinions from around the music world.

AWARDS 2025 WINNERS

Sonic youth

Korean pianist Yunchan Lim's extraordinary Chopin studio debut offers just a taste of his dazzling musicianship, writes Jessica Duchen

Recording of the Year, Newcomer & Instrumental

Yunchan Lim

Chopin

AWARDS 2025
RECORDING OF THE YEAR
BBC Music Magazine Awards
music
Yunchan Lim
The thrilling young pianist scoops an unprecedented hat-trick of awards!
VOCESS

Have BBC Music Magazine delivered straight to your device

when you take out a one month FREE trial* subscription to the digital edition.
Simply return to the home page to subscribe.

*After your one month trial your subscription will continue at £2.99 per month

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google play

amazon apps Available on kindle fire

BBC music MAGAZINE

The *full* score

Our pick of the month's news, views and interviews

AWARDS 2025
CRUISE COLLECTIVE

Raising a glass: composer Errollyn Wallen (third from left) and friends celebrate her Personality of the Year award

BBC Music Magazine Awards 2025

Stars of the music world enjoy a big night at Kings Place

C Schum
e and Piano
niel (oboe),
(piano)

music MAGAZINE AWARDS 2025

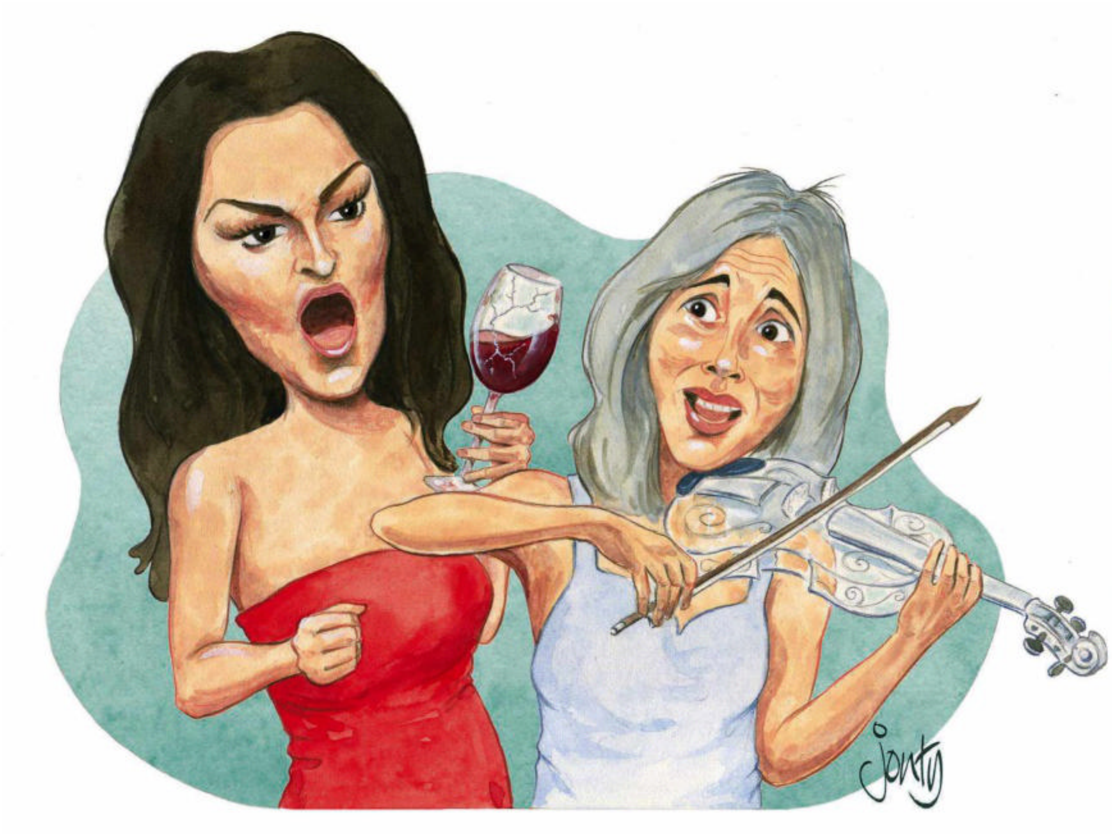
ATTENDE DOMINE

AWARDS 2025

na Má Vlast
Philharmonic

Smile!: (clockwise from top right) violinist Esther Yoo presents the Chamber Award; soprano Camilla Kerslake and former England rugby captain Chris Robshaw talk to *BBC Music*'s Steve Wright; tenor Nicky Spence entertains; drummer Stewart Copeland (right) presents the Orchestral Award; Nicholas Daniel heads for a photo, and performs with Julius Drake; the Bevan Famiy Consort on stage

JOHN MILLAR



Glass violin breaks into Guinness World Records

High fives in Japan, where the world's first ever playable glass violin has been officially recognised by the Guinness World Records. Made by glassware specialists Hario, the instrument has been around a while but only now been accorded its landmark status – presumably similar recognition will soon follow for its glass cello, guitar and *koto*. Apparently, the glass violin boasts a particularly resonant upper range, and while we will resist making the obvious suggestion as to which composer should be ideally played on it, we would recommend keeping it out of the way of sopranos with very loud, high voices, for equally obvious reasons…

Melodious carrot is to King's taste

Whether Charles III will ever get to play a glass violin or cello we don't know, though he did recently enjoy a tootle on a recorder made of carrot. During a performance by the London Vegetable Orchestra at a reception at Windsor Castle, His Majesty was persuaded to join in a rendition of 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' (above), adding dulcet carroty sounds to those of the swedes and turnips around him. As a thank you for his contribution, The King was presented with the instrument to keep. Or perhaps eat, as he saw fit.

Radio relaxation approved

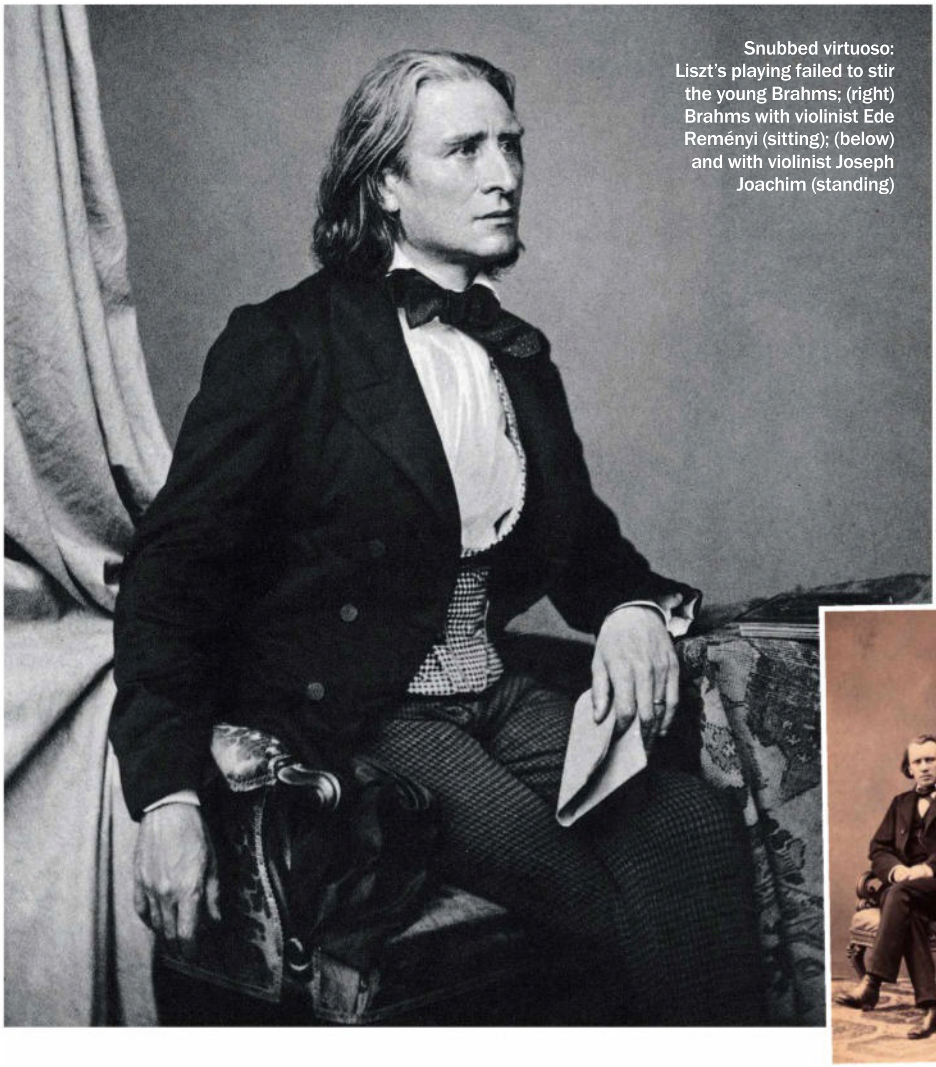
Ofcom has given the green light for the BBC to launch Radio 3 Unwind as a DAB+ radio station. Following a review, the government's communications regulatory body (formally known as The Office of Communications) concluded that the Radio 3 extension would not negatively affect competition stations to a significant degree. A similar thumbs up was given to the BBC's Radio 1 Dance and Radio 1 Anthems stations, but a new Radio 2 extension and extended broadcasting hours for Radio 5 Sports Extra were turned down.

Radio 3 Unwind is, in fact, already available to listen to, but currently only online via BBC Sounds. Launched last September as a stress-busting partner to Radio 3 itself, it has proved very popular, with nearly 150,000 BBC accounts accessing it in the first week of 2025 alone. As well as *Classical Unwind*, its flagship programme hosted by Sian Williams, its schedule also includes the likes of *Mindful Mix*, *Classical Wind Down* and *Ultimate Calm*, before listeners are gently ushered nodwards with *The Sleeping Forecast* at the end of the day.

'We are pleased,' says a BBC spokesperson about Ofcom's decision. 'The extensions with their brilliant programming have already proved popular on BBC Sounds and will now reach even more listeners on DAB.'

Settle back: Radio 3 Unwind has got DAB+ approval from Ofcom

GETTY ILLUSTRATION: JONTY CLARK



Snubbed virtuoso: Liszt's playing failed to stir the young Brahms; (right) Brahms with violinist Ede Reményi (sitting); (below) and with violinist Joseph Joachim (standing)

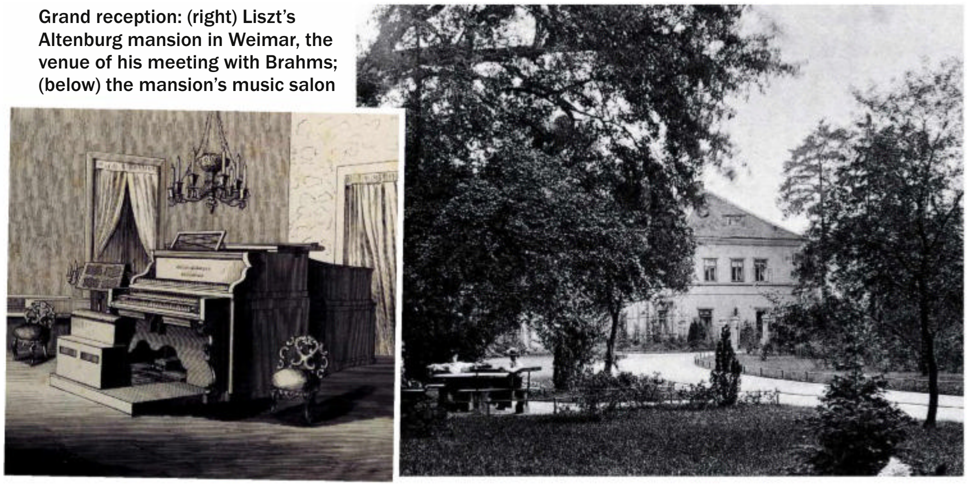
JUNE 1853

Liszt thunders away on the piano… but Brahms nods off

On the morning of 12 June 1853, a young man with long blond hair entered an opulent reception room at the Altenburg mansion in Weimar, capital city of the grand duchy of Saxe-Weimar. His name was Johannes Brahms, he had just turned 20, and he looked decidedly nervous. And not without reason: Brahms was there to meet Franz Liszt, whose charismatic public image and blistering virtuosity at the piano had earned him an unparalleled reputation in the salons and concert halls of Europe. Liszt was more than 20 years Brahms's senior and already a fêted composer. Brahms was a virtual nobody and yet to publish a single note of music. What could he do to catch the legendary Hungarian's attention?

Brahms's pathway to an audience with Liszt had relied heavily on serendipitous meetings and happenstance. Three years earlier, in his native Hamburg, he had accompanied a recital by the émigré Hungarian violinist Ede Reményi, and when Reményi returned to Hamburg in December 1852 the pair hooked up again. Reményi later recalled being smitten both by Brahms's physical appearance and by his exceptional prowess as a pianist. 'A sort of aureole seemed to linger around his face, it lighted up so beautifully,' he rhapsodised. 'And I distinctly remember soliloquising to myself: "There is a genius here. This is no ordinary pianist. Fate has laid her fingers on my friend."'

In early 1853, the two set out together on a semi-improvised tour, 'giving concerts in small villages and towns, writing and distributing the programmes ourselves'. It was far from glamorous, but they eventually achieved their goal of reaching Hanover, 100 miles away. There they met the eminent violinist Joseph Joachim, a friend of Reményi's from their student days in Vienna. Joachim asked Brahms to play one of his own compositions for him, and the effect was instantaneous. 'Never in the course of my artist's life have I been more completely overwhelmed,' Joachim commented later.



Grand reception: (right) Liszt's Altenburg mansion in Weimar, the venue of his meeting with Brahms; (below) the mansion's music salon

Joachim had been concertmaster of the orchestra Liszt conducted in Weimar, and wrote Brahms and Reményi a letter of introduction to his former employer – a priceless entrée to the world of high culture, influence and celebrity that Liszt represented. The idea was that Brahms would play his compositions for Liszt too, as he had for Joachim. But on the morning of 12 June, the unproved young composer froze: despite repeated promptings from Liszt and Reményi, Brahms was 'evidently very nervous', as one onlooker put it, and would play nothing. So Liszt himself sat down at the piano, and gave performances of Brahms's Scherzo in E flat minor (whose manuscript was apparently near-illegible) and part of the Sonata in C major, which stunned those present by their brilliance. 'Brahms was overpowered, and I wept,' Reményi later reported. Liszt himself gave a running commentary on the music as he played, and particularly praised the fiery Scherzo.

There was Brahms, eyes shut and apparently fast asleep in his armchair

Then came the incident which sealed the Brahms-Liszt meeting's notoriety in musical history. Finishing with Brahms's manuscripts, Liszt went on to play his own monumental Sonata in B minor for the select côterie of guests he had invited. At a particularly expressive point in the sonata, Liszt cast a sideways glance over the audience, checking the emotional effects of his music. And there, unfortunately, was Brahms, eyes shut and apparently fast asleep in his armchair. Liszt calmly completed the sonata, then left the room without further comment. He was, we can safely assume, far from happy with Brahms's callow, disrespectful behaviour.

Nor were the other guests amused by the young composer's slight to the revered master. 'Everybody looked astonished and annoyed,' Reményi reported. 'I was thunderstruck.' Brahms himself was quick to claim that he was suffering from fatigue, no doubt from all the travelling he and Reményi had been doing. But his attack of somnolence was in some ways emblematic of his later aversion to Liszt's music and his opposition (Wagner excepted) to the progressive 'New German School' Liszt represented. Brahms's instincts were more conservative: he disliked Liszt's opulent style of living and, according to one biographer, found his music 'shaky in form, thin in substance and overwrought in emotion'. Liszt, for his part, never played or conducted a single note of Brahms in public concerts or recitals.

In time, the two would go on to achieve a different type of notoriety when Cockney rhyming slangers coined the expression 'Brahms and Liszt' to denote an advanced state of inebriation. This regular verbal coming-together is in contrast to the men themselves who, it seems, never met again after their Altenburg encounter. It's likely Brahms's impromptu napping was part of the reason. ***Terry Blain***

GETTY

Paris planner: Georges-Eugène Haussmann

Also in June 1853...

6th: In response to Russia's demands to be empowered to protect Orthodox believers in the Ottoman Empire, Britain sends a fleet to **Besika Bay**, near the Dardanelles Strait, by way of warning. Russia is not remotely worried, however, and invades the Ottoman territories of Moldavia and Wallachia. The stand-off will eventually escalate into the Crimean War.

7th: Italian soprano **Giuseppina Ronzi de Begnis** dies, aged 53. In an illustrious career that began in her teens, Ronzi won admirers for her performances of Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini, particularly as the latter's Norma. A formidable character, she hit the headlines when, in 1834, she reportedly drew blood in a fistfight with fellow singer Anna del Sere during rehearsals for Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda*.

25th: In front of an audience that includes Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, Berlioz conducts the first British performance of his **Benvenuto Cellini** at Covent Garden. It does not go well. 'They even booed the overture to the *Carnaval romain*,' he reports, describing how a faction of Italian opera-goers had set out to ruin the evening from the start.

22nd: Napoleon III of France chooses **Georges-Eugène Haussmann** as the new prefect of Seine, tasking him with revitalising the city of Paris. Haussmann will oversee a huge renovation programme that includes a new sewer system, wide boulevards to improve traffic flow and landmark buildings such as the Gare du Nord, Gare de Lyon and Paris Opéra.

Late June: Engineer George Cayley makes aviation history when his **triplane glider** carries his coachman, John Appleby, in the air for 275m across Brompton Dale in Yorkshire – the first instance of a flying machine heavier than air transporting a passenger. On landing, Appleby resigns his post, complaining that he was employed to drive, not fly.

Music to my ears

ndon
soundtrack
estival
025

Film legend: Howard Shore headlines in London

The *BBC Music Magazine* team's current favourites...

Charlotte Smith *Editor*
Headlined by **Howard Shore**, the inaugural London Soundtrack Festival offered many opportunities to hear the composer's music – not least the first time 1991's *The Silence of the Lambs* had been screened with live orchestra. Accompanied by the Academy of St Martin in the Fields at the Barbican, it seemed the film hadn't aged a day – the soundtrack dialled up just enough to emphasise those human elements that elevate this extraordinary piece of cinema above ordinary horror fare.

Jeremy Pound *Deputy editor*
A couple of days at the Heidelberger Frühling music festival in Germany was enlivened by two wonderful horn players: Sarah Willis, playing with her Cuban ensemble Sarahbanda; and Ben Goldscheider, alongside an array of fine young musicians. And rounding things off was the **Vision String Quartet** who, after the serious matter of Shostakovich's Eighth Quartet by heart in the first half, let their hair down and turned the amplifier up for a thrilling selection of folk-style pieces from their album *Spectrum*.

Michael Beek *Reviews editor*
The **Three Choirs Festival** is just a couple of years shy of its 300th anniversary, and we recently raised a glass to its great history and bright future at a reception at The House of Commons. In the special surroundings of The Speaker's Chamber, we heard a selection of works by Elgar, John Rutter and Ola Gjeilo, sung by lay clerks from Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester cathedrals. A treat!

Steve Wright *Content producer*
I've been entranced by **Robert Schumann**'s Symphonic Etudes, and their brilliant mix of poetry and power. I love the way they unfold like a dramatic journey, full of shifting moods, dazzling technique and deep feeling. Each étude adds something new, building to a thrilling finale that feels like a celebration. His music in general has a restless, impulsive, almost improvisatory quality – nowhere more so than here.

Far-flung adventures: baritone Benjamin Appl; (opposite, clockwise) singing in Mexico with pianist Jorge Viladoms; preparing for an extremely dangerous road trip; basic seating in Chennai, India

Concert Heaven
Concert Hell

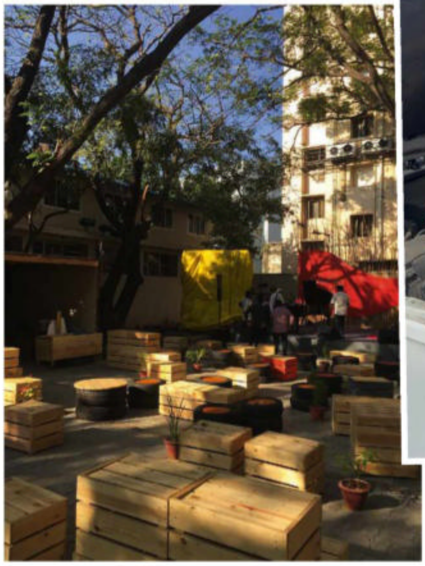
Top artists recall their best and worst performances

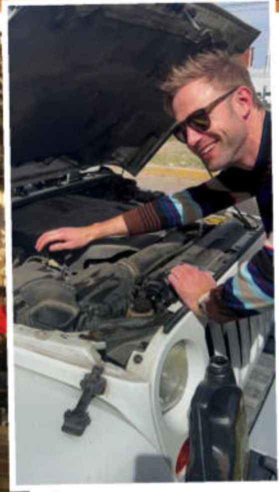
THIS MONTH
Benjamin Appl *Baritone*

CONCERT HEAVEN
Schubert Die schöne Müllerin
Benjamin Appl (baritone) et al
Chennai, India (February 2018)
One of the greatest experiences I had was during a tour through India a few years ago. It took place in Chennai; I'd never been there before, and the Goethe Institute was planning a festival about water to raise awareness of the resources, particularly in Chennai where one of the most polluted rivers goes straight through the city and into the sea. The idea was to have a pavilion on the beach, exactly at that spot where the river ends, but the local government didn't allow this, so we ended up in the backyard of an art gallery – it was very beautiful, with trees over the stage.

I performed *Die schöne Müllerin*, where you have the feeling that the Miller's boy is in complete balance with nature, next to one of the most polluted rivers in the world. There was wind rustling through the leaves, and in the background was the honking of all the *tuk-tuk*s, and I was in front of an audience that had never listened to western classical music in their lives. They were sitting there on boxes, they didn't have any texts or anything and it really was a very special evening; a monkey even came down and sat next to me on stage for a few minutes!

It was all very spontaneous, in a way, and it made me realise something about the essence of music, about the connection between cultures: even if we know nothing about the music or the texts, we can share the emotions and focus on a different level to the music, the origin of it and the origin of





humankind in relationship with the environment. What was wonderful and refreshing was that these people went there without prejudice or loaded with expectations. They were like a blank piece of paper we could write on. That was something very fulfilling.

CONCERT HELL

R Schumann 'Der Nussbaum' etc
Benjamin Appl (baritone),
Jorge Viladoms (piano)
León, Mexico (November 2023)

I went to Mexico on a tour with the pianist Jorge Viladoms; we had a concert in his hometown of Durango and the next day we were supposed to perform in León. I looked at the map, and despite Mexico being a very big country I didn't understand why we had to fly from Durango to Mexico City, change planes and then fly to León – on the map it looked like we could drive from one place to the other. I was told we would have to drive through the state of Zacatecas: one of the most dangerous things to do, as there are a lot of shootings and kidnapping of people who drive through!

We performed in Durango, and the next morning it turned out our flight to Mexico City was cancelled because of fog. So, the only chance to get to the next concert was by car. They organised a car via the state authorities, which had signs on for the missing persons department, so we thought that might be safer. We drove for seven or eight hours and everyone was quite tired, but no one dared to close their eyes. In the end everything was fine, though we arrived only minutes before the start of the concert; we were obviously not as focused as we wanted to be.

Afterwards the promoter said he was very happy we all arrived safely, as the string quartet who came last time couldn't play because the cellist was shot. So that was a very unfocused concert that I wished not to do; I was shaking on stage and it was not very pleasant for me.

Benjamin Appl's 'For Dieter...' is out on 23 May on Alpha Classics

DAVID RUANO, GETTY, WILL COATES-GIBSON/FOXBRUSH

Simply the best: John Scott inspired as both a conductor and organist

MyHero

Benjamin Nicholas on the deep and lasting influence of his fellow organist and choirmaster, the late ***John Scott***

I was very lucky to work under John Scott when I went to St Paul's Cathedral as an organ scholar. It was an amazing period for me. He was inspirational firstly because he was, quite simply, one of the finest organists of his generation and when I got to St Paul's he was at the height of his powers as a virtuoso. What was exceptional about him was that he had a fluency and great style in all areas of the repertoire. For instance, when I was there, he marked the Bach anniversary in 2000 by playing the complete organ works in an unforgettable series of recitals, but equally I heard him play many of the great Romantic works by the likes of Vierne and Franck and the major cycles by Messiaen. All were done in a dazzling way.

Watching him as a choir trainer, meanwhile, was also inspirational and has helped me ever since. He was a brilliant teacher of boy choristers and very highly regarded, and consequently they sang their hearts out for him. There was this remarkable sense of line that he used to try to instil in all of his choristers, which I think is what made his performances of the English Renaissance as well as Victorian and 20th-century church music so effective. I will admit that as a person he could be mildly terrifying, because he had the highest standards and expected others to put in the same effort and dedication as he did. However, he was also a very kind man, and would always let you know when you had done well.

Benjamin Nicholas conducts the Choir of Merton College, Oxford and Britten Sinfonia on Orchestral Anthems Vol. 2 (Delphian)

THE LISTENING SERVICE

Jurassic melodies

Forget those terrifying low-pitched roars – scientific research suggests that dinosaur voices may have been more tuneful than we think, reveals **Tom Service**

ILLUSTRATION: MARIA CORTE MAIDAGAN

Come and join a dinosaur choir! That's an invitation that any music-lover would surely want to take up: who could give up the chance to sit next to a velociraptor or T-Rex and put together a *Messiah* from scratch? Which, admittedly, might get rather messy if the animals got bored with the Hallelujah Chorus and determined to do what they do best and started to devour their fellow singers.

Thankfully, that's not what musician and scientist Courtney Brown has dreamt up in her new instrument, the Dinosaur Choir – and not only because there are no *Jurassic Park*-style DNA resurrections in sight. It's also because the animal whose skull it is based upon is Corythosaurus, a species of 'lambeosaurine hadrosaur' that only ate plants and the occasional crustacean, despite growing to around nine metres in length, and which lived in what's now Canada c.75 million years ago. Phew.

Courtney's instrument is a blood-red 3D-printed skull of the Corythosaurus, nearly a metre long, and including its extravagant crest, which paleontologists think was designed to resonate its vocalisations and give them their species-unique soundworld. Thanks to her work, all we have to do to become dinosaur performers is blow into a microphone and computers inside the skull analyse our vocal technique, translating human breathing and singing into a chorus of Corythosauri.

And it's shocking and startling to hear how the dinosaurs might actually have sounded – like a wailing, sighing and singing. It's a soundworld of uncanny resonance and strangeness, coming from the depths of the lowest possible register – and rescued from the abyss of time, giving a spinetingling sensation of encountering voices that haven't been heard since the late Cretaceous.

The sounds of prehistory are totally unlike those dreamt up by Hollywood directors

And that's where *Jurassic Park* comes in. The revelation of the Dinosaur Choir is that dinosaurs – lambeosaurine hadrosaurs, at least – didn't roar or scream as they always do in the movies. Because dinosaurs produced their vocal sounds through bird-like syrinxes rather than mammalian larynxes, the sounds of prehistory are totally unlike the ones that have been dreamt up by Hollywood directors and composers over the decades. Imagine watching any dino-movie in which the terrifying raptors wailed and sang instead of roared with the one-dimensional scary noises that they usually do. We would have sympathy for the saurians in a way that never normally happens, and we'd hear a real choir of dinosaurs as the species intermingled with each other to make a truly Jurassic soundscape.

That's Courtney Brown and her fellow creators' dream too, to extend the Dinosaur Choir to other species – and to as many human performers as possible. Corythosaurus is only the start. The Carnival of the Carnivorous Prehistoric Animals is coming to a concert hall near you soon. Be afraid. Be very afraid...

BBC RADIO 3 **Tom Service plays the best music to start your weekend in *Saturday Morning* at 9am**

FAREWELL TO…

Berlioz master: John Nelson conducts in 2002

John Nelson Born 1941 *Conductor*

John Nelson will be remembered as, above all, a Berlioz specialist whose recordings of the French composer's major works have been acclaimed as among the finest available – not least his take on the five-hour opera *Les Troyens*, which won the BBC Music Magazine Opera Award in 2018. There was, however, more to the American conductor's talents than just Berlioz, as shown in a long career that saw him hold the position of music director at organisations ranging from the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis to the Caramoor Festival in New York and the Soli Deo Gloria choir. A regular guest conductor at opera houses across the world, the Costa Rica-born Nelson conducted the New York premiere of *Les Troyens* at Carnegie Hall in the early 1970s, subsequently going on to make his debut at the New York Met in the same opera, filling in for an indisposed Rafael Kubelík at late notice.

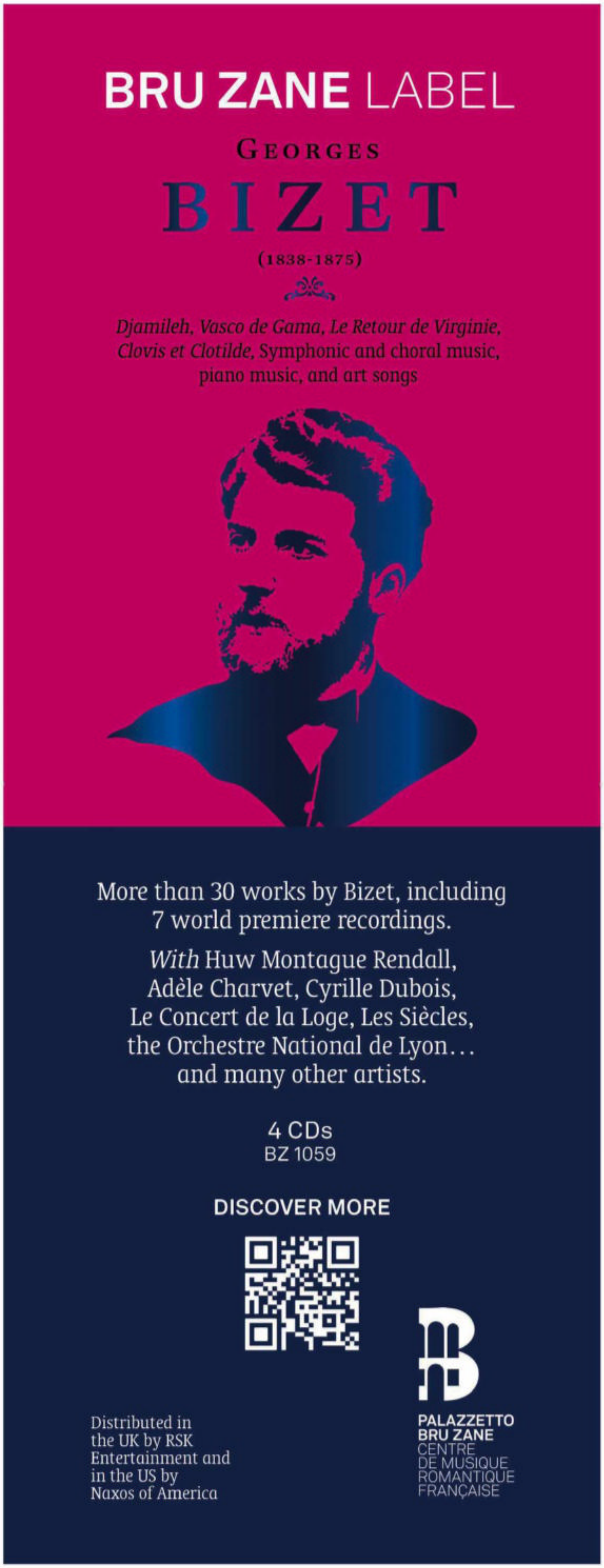
Peter Seiffert Born 1954 *Tenor*

In 1980, Peter Seiffert sang the role of Erik in Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* at Deutsche Oper Berlin, beginning a close association with the German composer that would continue for the entirety of his illustrious career. From Bavarian State Opera in Munich to Covent Garden in London and the New York Met, Seiffert excelled in Wagner roles such as Lohengrin, Parsifal, Tannhäuser, Tristan and Stolzing in *Die Meistersinger*, gracing them with character and intelligence plus exceptional ease in the upper register. Unsurprisingly, he was also both a regular and a favourite at Wagner's own Bayreuth Festival which, in its tribute, has described him as 'a great and wonderful singer' and 'an uncomplicated, very entertaining and generous person'. Away from the stage, Seiffert was married firstly to the Slovak opera soprano Lucia Popp, who died of cancer in 1993, and then later to the Austrian soprano Petra-Maria Schnitzer.

Martin Graham Born 1942 *Opera festival founder*

When Martin Graham started his career as a builder's assistant, little could he have imagined that one day he would find himself converting a Cotswold chicken barn into a venue both large and sophisticated enough to stage the grandest operas, including two productions of Wagner's complete *Ring* cycle. Adopting Rilke's quote 'That something is difficult must be one more reason for us to do it' as his mantra, Graham's founding of the Longborough Festival Opera in 1991 was a triumph of will against reason – conductor Georg Solti told Graham, who had no formal music background or significant family wealth, that he was mad to attempt it. However, after a successful Mozart double bill in its first year, the festival has gone on to stage operas by composers including Puccini, Verdi, Rossini and, above all, Wagner, becoming a much-cherished part of the British summer opera scene.

GETTY



BRU ZANE LABEL

GEORGES
BIZET
(1838-1875)

Djamileh, Vasco de Gama, Le Retour de Virginie, Clovis et Clotilde, Symphonic and choral music, piano music, and art songs

More than 30 works by Bizet, including 7 world premiere recordings.

With Huw Montague Rendall, Adèle Charvet, Cyrille Dubois, Le Concert de la Loge, Les Siècles, the Orchestre National de Lyon… and many other artists.

4 CDs
BZ 1059

DISCOVER MORE

Distributed in the UK by RSK Entertainment and in the US by Naxos of America

PALAZZETTO BRU ZANE
CENTRE DE MUSIQUE ROMANTIQUE FRANÇAISE

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

Pick a theme... and name your seven favourite examples

Operatic director **Thomas Guthrie** selects the best examples of music inspired by ancient mythology

Thomas Guthrie is a director, composer, fiddle player and baritone. He studied Classics at Cambridge University before pursuing vocal studies at the Royal Northern College of Music, eventually transitioning to directing. Since then, his productions have included Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* at the Royal Opera House and Verdi's *Aida* at the Liceu in Barcelona. But he is perhaps best defined by his stripped-down, actor-driven work, often involving puppetry. For the 2025 London Handel Festival he created an opera from two Handel works: the cantata *Apollo e Dafne* and the oratorio *The Choice of Hercules*. In August, he directs a day-to-night concert of Tavener's *The Veil of the Temple* for the opening of the Edinburgh Festival.

Handel *Apollo e Dafne*

Apollo and Dafne, which tells of a god falling passionately and unrequitedly in love with a nymph, is one of my all-time favourite myths. On some level you could see it as a rape myth; Apollo is so convinced that he wants to be with Dafne that he just doesn't give up. I see it as a story about consent; about how relationships can polarise. And what I love about Handel's cantata is its humane, psychological portrayal of the myth: in his version, Apollo has a sincere and genuine love for Dafne.

Handel *The Choice of Hercules*

This myth, about the young Hercules who is offered the choice between a life of pleasure or one of hardship and honour, is quite narratively simple. But the way Handel sets it is so nuanced, generating a deep mythological sense of that archetypal question: what is a life well lived? In the version I've just directed for the London Handel Festival, it becomes a piece about parental decisions: how do we say to our children, 'Turn off this iPad! Read this book!'? How do we choose the things that are going to give lifelong pleasure as opposed to easy wins? That tension is captured beautifully in the music.

THERESA PEWAL, GETTY

Monteverdi *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*

In my opinion, the whole of the *Odyssey*, on which this opera is based, is about the nature of home, and that journey we must take psychologically to reach a real sense of belonging. What I love about Monteverdi's version is that he focuses on the most human bit of the myth: the long-term relationships between people. The way that he portrays Ulisse's return to Penelope, who has lived under pressure of demand and stayed loyal and faithful all this time, is so direct, so clear and so heartbreaking.

Monteverdi *L'Orfeo*

Orfeo's journey into the underworld is full of symbolic resonance: you could see it as a search within oneself or as a confrontation with death and the bottomless pit of depression. Given that Orfeo uses the magic of music to be allowed into Hades, you could also read it as a statement about the power of the arts in moments of despair, when words fail to suffice. Monteverdi's music embodies this latter theme, particularly in Orfeo's Act 3 aria, 'Possente spirto e formidabil nume'. It's so beautiful, powerful and monumental that it forms the centre of the whole opera.

Franck *Psyché et Eros*

The myth of Psyché and Eros is about the importance of trust and seeing your partner for who they really are: Eros falls madly in love with Psyché and the two have a relationship, but in total darkness because he has forbidden her to look at him. You could read this as a reflection of polarised relationships, but it is also a commentary on all relationships. Composers seem to hone in on that relevance to us, not least Franck. His symphonic poem feels like a romantic dream.

Handel *Semele*

Handel's gorgeous opera tells the story of Semele's love for the god Jupiter, who rescues his mortal lover from the threat of a loveless marriage, installing her in a magical mountaintop palace. Here he pays her regular visits in mortal form. But Semele, led to believe she can become immortal if she could only see Jupiter in all his godly glory, becomes greedy, refusing to make love to him until he promises to give her whatever she asks for. The myth elicits some of Handel's most touching music, including the aria 'Where'er ye walk', in which Jupiter expresses his devotion.

Jonathan Dove *The Monster in the Maze*

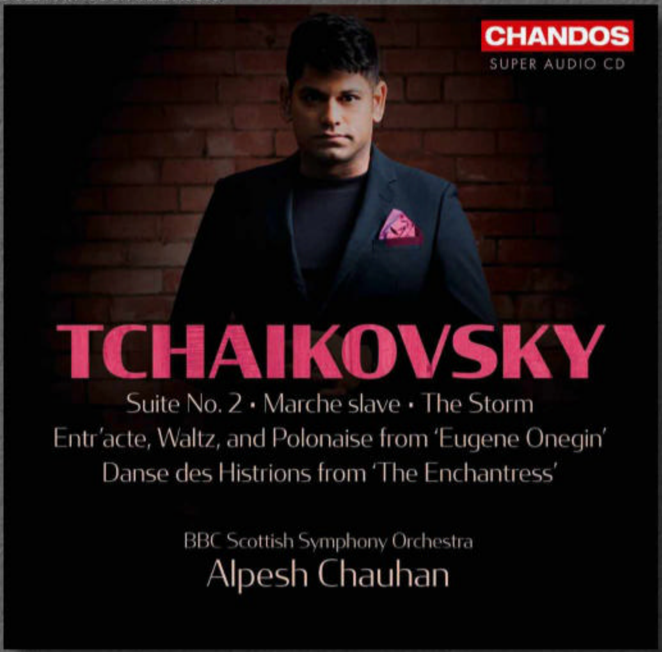
I directed the UK premiere of *The Monster in the Maze* in 2015. Inspired by the myth of the minotaur, Alasdair Middleton's libretto brings out themes of family relationships and growth – adolescents leaving home, facing their demons, returning transformed into adulthood. The monster, unseen and far more frightening because of it, blares horn-snorts through its nostrils. Dove's version ends happily, with the families reunited. It's a radiant piece, brimming with wit and Mediterranean light. *Interview by Hannah Nepilova*

Gods and monsters: Thomas Guthrie is inspired by music that depicts myths; (opposite) Heidi Stober as Semele, Garsington Opera, 2017

CHANDOS
THE SOUND OF CLASSICAL

JUNE RELEASES

DOLBY ATMOS SPATIAL AUDIO
SURROUND-SOUND HYBRID SACD


CHANDOS
SUPER AUDIO CD
TCHAIKOVSKY
Suite No. 2 • Marche slave • The Storm
Entr'acte, Waltz, and Polonaise from 'Eugene Onegin'
Danse des Histrions from 'The Enchantress'
BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra
Alpesh Chauhan

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

TCHAIKOVSKY
ORCHESTRAL WORKS VOL. 3

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra | Alpesh Chauhan

Alpesh Chauhan and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra continue their fascinating survey of orchestral works by Tchaikovsky, combining established repertoire with lesser-known works to great effect. *Marche slave* and excerpts from *Eugene Onegin* sit alongside 'Dance of the Tumblers', from *The Enchantress*, *The Storm*, (a student exercise), and the Second Orchestral Suite.

CHSA 5352

CHANDOS
HORIZONS French Mélodies
Boulanger · Canal · Chrétien · Debussy · Duparc · Polignac · Stroni
KITTY WHATELY
EDWIGE HERCHENRODER

CHAN 20324

HORIZONS: FRENCH MÉLODIES

Kitty Whately; Edwige Herchenroder

Kitty Whately and Edwige Herchenroder present a programme of French mélodies from a range of composers, all based in Paris at the turn of the twentieth century. The album contains four première recordings – three songs by Hedwige Chrétien, and Marguerite Canal's settings of seven songs from *La Flûte de jade*.

CHANDOS
LA MER French Piano Trios
SAINT-SAËNS · MEL BONIS · DEBUSSY/BEAMISH
NEAVE TRIO

CHAN 20337

LA MER – FRENCH PIANO TRIOS

Neave Trio

The Neave Trio's new album features Saint-Saëns's Piano Trio No. 2, Mel Bonis's *Soir – Matin*, and Sally Beamish's arrangement of Debussy's *La Mer* – a treatment that presents both performers and listeners with a completely new perspective on these well-loved seascapes.

CHANDOS
WILHELM
FURTWÄNGLER
SYMPHONY NO. 2
ESTONIAN NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
NEEME JÄRVI

CHAN 20373

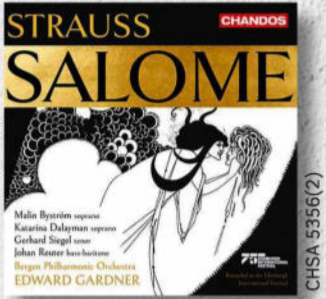
FURTWÄNGLER
SYMPHONY NO. 2 IN E MINOR

Estonian National Symphony Orchestra | Neeme Järvi

Furtwängler considered himself to be a composer, and learned to conduct principally to be able to promote his own works. His second symphony was composed in 1945–46 whilst he was self-exiled in Switzerland.

ALREADY AVAILABLE

DOLBY ATMOS SPATIAL AUDIO
SURROUND-SOUND HYBRID SACD


STRAUSS
CHANDOS
SALOME
Malin Byström soprano
Katarina Dalayman soprano
Gerhard Siegel tenor
Johan Reuter bass-baritone
Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra
EDWARD GARDNER

CHSA 5356(2)

RICHARD STRAUSS
SALOME

Soloists | Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra
Edward Gardner

This live recording was made at a performance at the Usher Hall during the Edinburgh International Festival in August 2022. Edward Gardner and the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra are joined by an outstanding cast of soloists, led by Malin Byström in the title role, Gerhard Siegel as Herod, Katarina Dalayman as Herodias, and Johan Reuter as John the Baptist.

WWW.CHANDOS.NET
[SACD • CD • USB]

Spotify
Listen on Apple MUSIC
prestomusic
EUROPADISC CLASSICAL

STAY IN THE KNOW

Chandos Records, Chandos House, 1 Commerce Park, Commerce Way, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HX. Tel: 01206 225200

Richard Morrison

Music's power to unlock memories in dementia patients is remarkable

Despite living in Vienna, a city teeming with orchestras and composers, Sigmund Freud was intensely irritated by music. 'Some rational or perhaps analytic turn of mind in me rebels against being moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected,' he wrote. In other words, he resented music because he couldn't explain in analytical terms its effects on us – as he could explain (or thought he could) our sexual urges or dreams.

More than a century later, we still don't understand how certain combinations of soundwaves trigger feelings of melancholy, exhilaration, wistfulness, love or a thousand other emotions too tangled to put into words. On page 54, Rebecca Franks looks at the complex and mysterious way in which mental illness affects musical creativity. But what fascinates me as much is the reverse: the remarkable effect of music on people with dementia.

We can't completely explain it – this way that music unlocks, albeit temporarily, brains that in other respects have become permanently unhinged from rational thought, or indeed from their own sense of self. All we can say is that music is often 'the last thing to go', perhaps because our musical instincts are more deeply embedded in our brains (and in our 300,000-year development as a species) than, say, verbal language or conscious reasoning.

But just because we can't explain it doesn't mean that we can't use the phenomenon to light up the lives of dementia sufferers (over a million in the UK now). Some of the most moving musical experiences of my life have been when I have witnessed such work at first-hand. And I know I'm not the only one who feels this. Over the decades I have talked to many performers involved with wonderful charities such as Lost Chord and Live Music Now that take music into care homes, hospitals and hospices. All regard this work not as a chore to fill their diaries between 'proper' concerts, but as the most life-affirming music-making they do.

In his brilliant book *Musicophilia,* the great British neurologist Oliver Sacks chronicled many ways in which music can be used as a stimulus for brains that have otherwise shut down. One of the most potent is using old songs to revive submerged memories and a sense of 'self' in dementia sufferers. The problem for musicians is knowing which songs have that magic effect – and remembering that most old people in care homes today were young in the rock'n'roll era, not the Second World War.

> Because musical instinct is so deeply embedded in our brains, it is often 'the last thing to go'

What's even better, perhaps, is when it's possible to get dementia sufferers actively involved in music-making. Fifteen years ago, Wigmore Hall – renowned primarily for presenting world-class musicians in a hushed, reverential atmosphere – developed a very different aspect to its work. It took over responsibility for the Music for Life scheme, providing activities for dementia sufferers and their carers by running a Singing with Friends choir.

I first encountered this group at a fundraising concert in Buckingham Palace, where it performed a Mozart anthem and an English madrigal with heartrending tenderness. The sense of shared joy between audience and performers, patients and carers, the well and unwell, was unique in my experience. Talking to participants' family members afterwards, I heard the same testimony over and over again: 'For an hour, at least, I got my real husband (or mother or father) back.'

The case of Teddy Mac is a celebrated instance of what a therapeutic experience music can be. The former Butlins redcoat and club singer was hit by Alzheimer's in his seventies, losing his memory and becoming aggressive towards friends and family. They noticed, however, that singing his old repertoire had a remarkably therapeutic effect. So they encouraged him to sing more and more. His videos went viral and at 80 he released a single on Decca, then two albums, raising more than £150,000 for the Alzheimer's Society.

As a young journalist on *The Times,* I watched aghast as my mentor, the great columnist Bernard Levin, gradually lost his memory and his magisterial command of words. Later, I saw my mother's personality change beyond recognition as she too succumbed to Alzheimer's. More and more of us will find ourselves responsible for dementia sufferers – and perhaps, one day, be sufferers ourselves. Music can't permanently reverse mental decline, but it can make that frightening journey less bleak. I hope there's a local choir for me to join when the time comes.

Richard Morrison is chief music critic and a columnist of The Times

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE
AWARDS 2025
IN ASSOCIATION WITH CRUISE COLLECTIVE
RECORDING OF THE YEAR

AWARDS 2025 WINNERS

Sonic youth

Korean pianist Yunchan Lim's extraordinary Chopin studio debut offers just a taste of his dazzling musicianship, writes Jessica Duchen

LISA-MARIE MAZZUCCO

Recording of the Year, Newcomer & Instrumental

DECCA
Yunchan Lim
Chopin
Études

Yunchan Lim

Chopin

Études, Opp 10 & 25

Yunchan Lim (piano)

Decca 487 0122

The BBC Music Magazine Recording of the Year typically goes to a grand-scale affair – a giant symphony, perhaps, or an all-star opera. This year, however, it is the remarkable debut on Decca by Yunchan Lim, whose recording of the Chopin Études Opp. 10 and 25, made when he was only 19, has swept all competition aside. 'Given that 2024 saw the release of many outstanding albums, I did not expect this outcome at all,' the South Korean pianist comments. 'I am so grateful for it. It is truly an honour.'

When I interviewed Lim for the album's booklet notes last year, the great eye-opener was the sheer scale of concept that he seemed to apply to these magically poetic pieces. Many of us, listening to the two sets of 12 études each, might quietly invent a scenario, but Lim's personal narrative for the music travelled all the way from the Big Bang of creation at the opening of Op. 10 to the end of the world at the conclusion of Op. 25 – and he says that the images he dreams up change every time.

Among his strongest influences are the 'golden age' recordings of pianists such as Alfred Cortot, Ignaz Friedman and Vladimir Horowitz. 'I believe it was their very spirit that captivated me – not merely specific details of how they played certain passages,' he says. The playing of Evgeny Kissin has also left a powerful impact: 'As a child, I was a great admirer of Kissin, and over time I became deeply drawn to musicians from the old Russian music school. Looking back, I believe that rather than focusing solely on practice, I spent countless hours listening to various interpretations by great musicians, and that, in itself, was immensely valuable.'

Lim grew up in Siheung, not far from Seoul – 'an environment that provided me with solitude, an ideal setting for practising'. His parents are not musicians, or even, he says, particularly connected to music. 'As a result, they never interfered in my musical journey, allowing me to explore and study music independently

A star is born: pianist Yunchan Lim's winning Chopin album is a shining debut

and freely – which, in many ways, was beneficial for me.' As for deciding to become a musician, there was never any question about it: 'The moment I began playing the piano, I knew.'

One chief mentor has helped to form him: 'Just as Zoltán Kocsis had Pál Kadosa, I had a great professor: Minsoo Sohn,' he says. 'I have been studying under him for nearly a decade, and he will forever be the only and main teacher in my life. Beyond him, I am deeply grateful to the friends and colleagues who have inspired me. I have fond memories of playing the piano for hours with my friends after lessons. These experiences shaped me profoundly, and I believe they are closely linked to the traditions of both the Hungarian and Russian music schools. Though their approaches were different, they were all my teachers.'

The Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2022 brought Lim his breakthrough moment. His performance of Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 3 in the final, livestreamed along with the entire contest, catapulted him to first prize and then went viral. To date, it has had more than 17 million views on YouTube.

It's tempting to wonder how he must have felt at the time. 'I simply wanted to do my best on the stage that was given to me,' he says. 'I did not participate in the competition with the goal of winning; rather, I saw it as an opportunity to present my music on the world stage and review myself as a musician during my teenage years. For that reason, I was so grateful to have been able to perform all the pieces I had prepared.' And since then? 'Apart from an increased number of concert engagements, not much has changed. I believe that competition results should not alter a musician's life.'

> 'I knew that I would be a pianist as soon as I began to play'

Lim has a wide repertoire, with a striking ability to capture the atmosphere of each work and every composer, whether performing Bach's 15 Sinfonias, Beethoven's *Eroica Variations* or Liszt's *Transcendental Études*. It is a matter of balancing head and heart, he says: 'I strive to harmonise what my heart tells me with what my mind dictates. There are times when I simply play as my heart directs me. However, I've often experienced that if I ignore the voice of reason in my mind and only follow my emotions, the audience struggles to connect with my performance. Conversely, if I only listen to the voice in my head and perform solely based on intellectual reasoning, it becomes difficult to deeply move the listeners.'

Like most great pianists, Lim is continually self-critical – 'It is difficult to find anything in my own playing that I truly love' – and although his stage demeanour seems cool and collected, it masks something different: 'I am probably the most nervous person in the world. There is no solution but to embrace it.' And in the end, there is only one way forward: 'I will continue to devote myself wholeheartedly to music.'

A soaring success: Fenella Humphreys, Michael Seal and Adrian Sutton at the concerto recording session; (right) Seal conducts and confers with Sutton; Humphreys channels a gull in flight

Premiere Award Adrian Sutton

CHANDOS
ADRIAN SUTTON
VIOLIN CONCERTO
FIVE THEATRE MINIATURES
A FIST FULL OF FIVES
WAR HORSE SUITE
SHORT STORY
FENELLA HUMPHREYS
VIOLIN
MICHAEL SEAL

Adrian Sutton
Violin Concerto*; Five Theatre Miniatures; A Fist Full of Fives; War Horse Suite; Short Story
*Fenella Humphreys (violin); BBC Philharmonic/Michael Seal
Chandos CHAN 20349

'I've always wanted to write a violin concerto,' says Adrian Sutton. 'In fact, when I was a student at Goldsmiths College in the late 1980s, I wrote a disastrous attempt. It was truly hideous and thankfully never got performed!' The beautiful, soulful work on Sutton's Premiere Award-winning album, partly inspired by the soaring flight of the gull in Richard Bach's novella *Jonathan Livingston Seagull,* is lightyears away from his early attempt – and draws on his skills not only as a violinist but on his maturity as a composer. 'I feel now that I'm equipped with the wherewithal to grapple properly with what is quite an unforgiving form,' he continues. 'I had in my head the image of a gull wanting to perfect his flight technique, of wanting to strike out on his own, and the exhilaration and loneliness of that journey.'

> 'I imagined a gull wanting to perfect his flight technique'

The Violin Concerto is the centrepiece of an album that encompasses Sutton's well-known works for the stage and his roots as an orchestral composer. 'I want to take this opportunity to show that although my career over the past 20 years has focused on the theatre, the concert hall is the world I came from and trained for,' he explains.

As such, the album's *Five Theatre Miniatures* and *War Horse Suite* take cues from his theatrical works and expand them for the concert hall in delightfully diverse and unexpected ways. 'I'm

ROBIN CLEWLEY, MARCO BORGGREVE

straddling two worlds,' he explains, 'and I want to show that stylistically the theatre and the concert hall don't have to be separate entities – sure, the music is put to different practical purposes, but it can still have a common character. I absolutely relished the opportunity to transform this material and to place it in a concert hall setting. It all came together incredibly well.' *Charlotte Smith*

Honorary Brit: Vilde Frang is a long-term admirer of Elgar

Concerto Award Vilde Frang

VIOLIN CONCERTO
ELGAR
VILDE FRANG
DEUTSCHES SYMPHONIE-ORCHESTER BERLIN ROBIN TICCIATI

Elgar *Violin Concerto*

Vilde Frang (violin); Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin/ Robin Ticciati
Warner Classics 2173240942

'I'm really moved by this Award,' says Vilde Frang. 'It makes me the happiest person. I have known the Elgar Concerto for a long time and first played it in concert with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in 2017 – but I still came to it relatively late. I had always known the Cello Concerto, of course – it's Elgar in a nutshell. But the Violin Concerto seemed quite abstract, such a demanding listen at almost an hour. It's quite difficult to find the key to this music. But once you *do* find your way in, it engulfs you and won't let you go!'

It's perhaps because it took some time to understand the concerto that Frang is so pleased with this recognition for her recording. Though intimately acquainted with Elgar's musical language now, her first live performance in Birmingham was, she readily admits, a 'scary experience'.

'The CBSO know this concerto inside out,' she reveals. 'They live and breathe Elgar. So, playing this work in the UK was like trying to give a Shakespearean speech with a Norwegian accent! But I had to launch myself into the water without a life raft, to play it in front of an audience from memory, to achieve the sense of freedom I now feel when playing this work.'

When it came to recording the Elgar, Frang was delighted to be working with Robin Ticciati – a conductor she knows well. 'I love Robin,' she enthuses. 'I really couldn't think of any better companion in this music – he's such a radiant, emotional person who wears his heart on his sleeve, and he had built up such a close and special relationship with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin. Plus, we had performed the work live together before the recording, and that was crucial!' *Charlotte Smith*

102nd Arena di Verona Opera Festival 2025

13th June
6th September 2025

Fondazione
ARENA DI VERONA

Francesco Ommassini
Roberto Bolle
Francesca Di Sauro
Giovanni Andrea Zanon
Igor Golovatenko
Erin Morley
Anna Pirozzi
Aleksandra Kurzak
Michele Spotti
Luca Salsi
Pinchas Steinberg
Ekaterina Semenchuk
Christian Van Horn
Vasilisa Berzhanskaya
Luca Micheletti
Gregory Kunde
Anna Netrebko
Maria José Siri
Roberto Tagliavini
Daniel Oren
Youngjun Park
Angel Blue
Andrea Battistoni
Jonas Kaufmann
Erwin Schrott
Gianluca Buratto
Brian Jagde
Olga Maslova
Alisa Kolosova
Roberto Alagna
Luciano Ganci
Sofia Koberidze
Nadine Sierra
Galeano Salas
Enea Scala
Yusif Eyvazov
Simon Lim
Agnieszka Rehlis
Ludovic Tézier
Alexander Vinogradov
Pene Pati
Dmitry Korchak
Giorgi Manoshvili
Aigul Akhmetshina
Francesco Ivan Ciampa
Francesco Meli
Amartuvshin Enkhbat
Rosa Feola
Speranza Scappucci
Marina Rebeka
Raffaele Pe
Mariangela Sicilia
Clémentine Margaine
Piotr Beczala
Anita Rachvelishvili

© HEADS Collective

The Stars of Opera light up the Arena

This summer a **cast of stars** awaits you once again at the 102nd Arena di Verona Opera Festival 2025.
Discover the programme and all the details at **www.arena.it**

The most Italian place on Earth®

arena.it

Main Partner
UniCredit

Family Partner
GENERALI

Automotive Partner
VOLKSWAGEN GROUP ITALIA

Official Sponsor
CALZEDONIA
RANA
Bonomi
GENNY

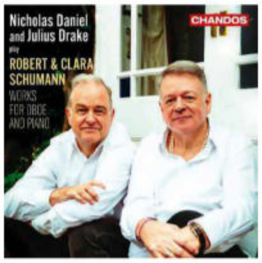
Mobility Partner
DB

Accessibility Partner
müller

Media Partner
RTL 102.5

A telepathic bond: Julius Drake (left) and Nicholas Daniel are long-term collaborators

Chamber Award Nicholas Daniel/Julius Drake



C Schumann • R Schumann
Works for Oboe and Piano
Nicholas Daniel (oboe), Julius Drake (piano)
Chandos CHAN20295

Robert Schumann's Three Romances, the only works he wrote for oboe, have been at the heart of Nicholas Daniel and Julius Drake's repertoire right from the early 1980s. But, says Daniel, their appeal remains as fresh as ever. 'They are like great Shakespeare,' he explains. 'I can't count the number of times I've either played or taught them, but it is astonishing how, even within just the first one, you can constantly find new approaches and new things to explore. They are constantly rewarding.'

To fill a whole album of works for oboe and piano by Robert and Clara Schumann, Daniel and Drake have had to plunder and adapt repertoire written for other instruments. Not that the composers would have minded, says Daniel: 'The original publications of many of these pieces had alternate instruments – the *Adagio and Allegro*, Op. 70, for instance, was written for many different options. What you do is make colours that imply the depth of register of other instruments, and there's no discomfort in playing any of them. We've also included a song, "Mondnacht", which sets a poem by Eichendorff that represents so much to me about what you're trying to do as a musician – you're constantly going away but then returning to where you belong.'

> 'More and more we have an unspoken understanding'

Talking of which, wherever else Daniel has ventured over the decades, playing Schumann in the company of Drake has always been a constant. 'Our rehearsals are a combination of spoken and unspoken things – more and more unspoken these days, as we have this sort of telepathy which is just an amazing feeling. And when it came to recording these pieces, our wonderful producer Jonathan Cooper knew exactly when to contribute or allow us to do our thing. He added a sense of almost meditative calm.' *Jeremy Pound*

ALEXANDER JAMES, MARCO BORGGREVE

Home truths: Semyon Bychkov

Orchestral Award Semyon Bychkov

Smetana ***Má vlast***
Czech Philharmonic/Semyon Bychkov
Pentatone PTC 518 7203

Smetana Má Vlast
Czech Philharmonic
Semyon Bychkov

'I think the orchestra played this music before it was composed. It is so much in their DNA…' So says conductor Semyon Bychkov of the Czech Philharmonic, who poured their hearts into this recording of Smetana's love letter to his homeland. Released to celebrate the composer's 200th birthday, *Má vlast* is a work Bychkov himself adores and believes has meaning for so many.

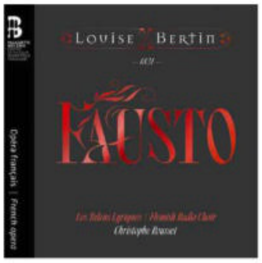
'I asked myself why I was so deeply touched by it. After all, I was not born in the Czech Republic. Somehow it struck me that the title itself is "My Country" and all of us have one. It is about the roots that everyone has: there is a feeling of identification that makes it universal.'

It's not just the messaging, but Smetana's work which demands appreciation: 'The quality of music is so extraordinary in its, at once, simplicity and yet complexity; the melodic side is very clear, and yet what he makes of the material is simply staggering, because he never repeats the same gesture.'

Bychkov is also keen to recognise just how contemporary *Má vlast* is. 'It resonates in today's world as much as it did in the time of Smetana,' he says. 'If one thinks of his own country at the time, it was dominated by somebody bigger and stronger – in this case it was the Austrian Empire. Smetana was born into the German language and had to learn Czech. That would provoke a strong sentiment in the nation: the desire to protect its identity, language, culture and customs. With that comes the dream of independence to live as you wish, and not as somebody tells you.' *Michael Beek*

Forgotten treasure: conductor Christophe Rousset; (top right) Karine Deshayes and (right) Karina Gauvin

Opera Award | Christophe Rousset



Louise Bertin ***Fausto***
Karine Deshayes; Karina Gauvin et al; Les Talens Lyriques; Flemish Radio Choir/ Christophe Rousset *Bru Zane BZ1054*

Kudos must go to the Palazzetto Bru Zane Foundation, the Venice-based organisation working wonders in bringing neglected 19th-century French Romantic music from the brink of oblivion. Louise Bertin's 1831 opera *Fausto* is a fine example of their work, entrusted in this case to conductor Christophe Rousset who, with a hand-picked cast, breathed vital new life into a work which did not deserve to be left gathering dust. But why was *Fausto* so unjustly relegated?

'The tragedy of Madame Bertin,' Rousset reveals, 'was that she was the daughter of Louis-François Bertin, who was very known in Paris. He had a very powerful position as director of one of the most important revues in the city, and the critics said she got all the good opportunities because of her father, not considering her talent. Her talent was recognised by Berlioz, for instance, but when she created an opera at the Paris Opéra it was booed, and when she created this one it was not a success. So it was difficult for it to survive. She stopped composing operas and concentrated on *mélodies* and other things. It's a shame, because it's really good music.'

> 'There are some delicious melodies and orchestration'

Indeed, our original review of the recording cited the score's 'extraordinary qualities', something the conductor agrees with. 'There is quite a diversity of expression; there is a little of the comic in the duet between Mephisto and his lover, with a touch of Rossini in the *concertato* singing. There is a very gloomy atmosphere when it's about Hell and the world of Mephistopheles, and there are some delicious melodies; the orchestration, too, from the Overture on, is quite something. I thought, "Wow!"'

A recent stage revival in Essen goes to show this is a work that demands reassessment, and Bru Zane's recording can be thanked for bringing it out into the light. *Michael Beek*

MICHAEL SLOBODIAN, AYMERIC GIRAUDEL, NATHANAEL MERGUI

Bruckner & Gesualdo Motets
Monteverdi Choir Jonathan Sells

THE NEW RECORDING
SDG
Soli Deo Gloria

Bachfest Leipzig 2024:
"The Monteverdi Choir, led by Jonathan Sells... proves its extraordinary class: an unearthly purity of intonation, unparalleled clarity of articulation, playful word-painting – all singing virtuosically... a soundscape of boundless dynamic range and brilliance."
- Leipziger Volkszeitung

SDG736

Available on iTunes | Listen on Apple Music | deezer | Distributed by Naxos in the UK & USA www.monteverdi.co.uk/shop | prestomusic | Available at amazon | Spotify

CORO
I FAGIOLINI

CORO
I FAGIOLINI
1612 ITALIAN
VESPERS
VIADANA | PALESTRINA | GABRIELI | MONTEVERDI
I FAGIOLINI ROBERT HOLLINGWORTH

COR16212

www.cororecords.com

Opportunity of a lifetime: (anticlockwise) Paul McCreesh conducts the recording sessions; Gabrieli Consort and Roar sing side-by-side; tenor Nicky Spence; in deep discussion; mezzo-soprano Anna Stéphany

Choral Award Paul McCreesh

Elgar ***The Dream of Gerontius***
Nicky Spence et al; Gabrieli Consort and Players/Paul McCreesh
Signum Classics SIGCD785

Conductor Paul McCreesh has appeared on these pages before. Beginning his collection with the Technical Excellence Award in 2012, he has since added further trophies in 2013, 2019 and 2020, the last of which – for Purcell's *King Arthur* – was also the overall Recording of the Year. 'I don't go into the recording studio unless I feel I've really got something to say about a piece of music,' he replies when asked to explain his magic touch. 'I also take a long time to think about music – I'm now thinking about the pieces I might record in five or ten years' time. I think that there should be a real reason to make a recording.'

> 'I don't go into the studio unless I've got something to say'

With this level of thought and preparation, McCreesh recordings tend to invite a sense of occasion to them – something, he says, that he certainly felt during the sessions for *The Dream of Gerontius*: 'There was a tremendous atmosphere. People realised that they weren't going to get the chance to record this great piece ever again – certainly not on period instruments. There was a real desire to make the most of the opportunity, and I was so delighted to stand in front of such a great group of people.'

By 'great', McCreesh could quite easily be referring to both quality and number. Alongside tenor Nicky Spence as Gerontius himself, the other soloists and Gabrieli Consort and Players – including

oboist Nicholas Daniel, winner of this year's Chamber Award – were joined by 100 members of Gabrieli Roar, the choral scheme set up by McCreesh to give children from all backgrounds the opportunity to perform at the highest level. 'They upped their game hugely when they were placed amongst professional singers,' says McCreesh, 'but I also think that the professionals were challenged to match them in enthusiasm and realise just how important the process of making music is. If you get the balance right, young people can do anything.' *Jeremy Pound*

FRANCES MARSHALL, SIMON FOWLER

Ardent champion: Elsa Dreisig is flying the flag for the little-known Rita Strohl

Vocal Award Elsa Dreisig

Une compositrice de la démesure
RITA STROHL
Volume 1
Musique vocale
LA BOÎTE À PÉPITES

Rita Strohl *Songs*

Elsa Dreisig (soprano), Romain Louveau (piano) et al *La Boîte à Pépites BAP04-05*

French-Danish soprano Elsa Dreisig is delighted that her album of songs by the little-known French composer Rita Strohl (1865-1941) has been recognised. And that's because, she's convinced, Strohl is overdue such recognition. 'I'm so thrilled,' she says. 'This album meant a lot to me. I'm so happy that others will get to share in the emotion I felt discovering this music. I think it's really unfair that this music was never recorded previously, and it's fabulous that this great female composer is finally getting this attention.'

Their obscurity aside, what was it about Rita Strohl's songs that so spoke to Dreisig? 'I just love how bold and expressive the voice parts are. Typically, French repertoire requires quite an ethereal, delicate voice, with a lot of "water" and "wind". Composers such as Fauré and Debussy generally give the piano the "colour", while the voice delivers the text, often in an almost spoken-word style. That's beautiful, of course, but it can also be frustrating – because you don't get to use all your vocal potential.

'Strohl's songs are very different. She gives the voice as much of the melody as the piano.' Moreover, those melodies themselves make the singer work harder. 'This music feels very organic – it's not written intellectually, but rather from the body, from the stomach even. There's more expression, bigger phrases, a larger spectrum. Other French repertoire tends to stay within one octave: these songs require a far bigger vocal range. Singing Rita Strohl takes stamina. If you're putting this cycle in a recital, be careful what you pair it with!'

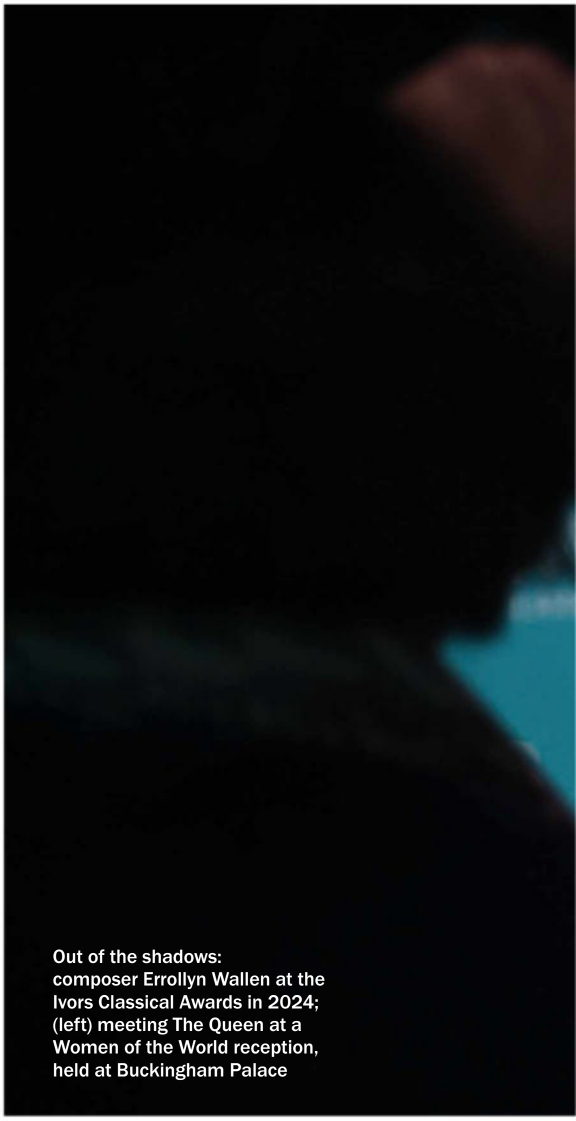
What are Dreisig's hopes for Strohl's music now? 'I hope this recognition helps to get this wonderful music out there more. It should be as well known as the songs of Debussy and Fauré – or even Schubert and Schumann!' *Steve Wright*

Queen of arts

Errollyn Wallen is riding high on a year of triumphs that include becoming Master of the King's Music, writes Claire Jackson

BBC Music Magazine Personality of the Year

Errollyn Wallen



Out of the shadows: composer Errollyn Wallen at the Ivors Classical Awards in 2024; (left) meeting The Queen at a Women of the World reception, held at Buckingham Palace

The phone rang – the disruption was unexpected, as was the source. Errollyn Wallen agreed that she would accept a call from the Palace, excited at the thought of a potential function to attend. There have been a few of those lately. In November, the composer was inducted into the Academy Fellowship at the Ivors Classical Awards. It followed receipt of Member of the Order of the British Empire in the 2007 Birthday Honours and Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the 2020 New Year Honours. But this time, the invitation was different: would Wallen consider becoming Master of the King's Music?

'You could have knocked me down with a feather,' says Wallen, 'and, of course, I said yes. The role fits well with my broader priorities: championing music-making for all, access to good music education for every child, and demystifying the world of composing.' It's these attributes – achieved alongside music creation at the highest level, including dozens of operas, songs and orchestral works – that have led to her most recent award: BBC Music Magazine Personality of the Year.

'An astonishing honour' is how Wallen describes this recognition, observing that the accolade is usually associated with conductors or instrumentalists. Indeed, recent winners include organist Anna Lapwood (2024), conductor Dalia Stasevska (2023), tenor Nicky Spence (2022) and violinist Nicola Benedetti (2021). 'Composers often lurk in the background,' continues Wallen. 'We write the music and it's the performers who take it into the world. When I'm composing, I'm not often thinking about my personality; I'm focused on someone else's. So, I'm delighted to accept this award on behalf of composers who don't get the opportunity to bring their personality to bear in public.'

> 'Composers lurk in the background. It's performers who take music into the world'

Born in Belize, Wallen moved to the UK when she was a toddler, finding a passion for ballet before refocusing on music, as documented in her 2023 memoir *Becoming a Composer*. Her upbringing – raised by a Belizean uncle and British aunt in London after her parents moved to the US, where the young Wallen expected to join them permanently but never did – seems unconventional, and, to an outsider, potentially traumatic. Wallen doesn't ever describe it in that way. Her formal compositional education in the 1970s focused, as was the vogue, on serialism; subsequent works retain a flavour of that language, infused with Wallen's own melodic inflection. Within her wide-ranging aesthetic there have been references to multiculturalism and decolonisation; this year's Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey included Wallen's new piece, *Way of My Dreaming Heart* for solo soprano, and a reimagining of *Jerusalem* created for the 2020 Proms was dedicated to the Windrush generation.

GETTY

Wallen is currently at home in Orkney, the northern Scottish archipelago that was the retreat of that other royally appointed composer, Peter Maxwell Davies (Master of the Queen's Music, 2004-14). She never set out to live there: 'It was the house that drew me,' she says. 'It's peaceful, secluded; surrounded by woodland and the sea.' There's something about the wild landscape and curious archaeological heritage that appeals to the creative spirit, not to mention the useful practicalities in maintaining an isolationist existence. Wallen is refreshingly open about the realities of life as a composer, from describing how work is achieved – lots of thinking and strictly enforced scribbling – to sharing insights into the laborious hours of orchestration and the administration (scheduling, invoicing, taking Zoom calls from journalists). 'I feel as if I'm a secretary most of the time,' she jokes.

One aspect of Wallen's approach that makes her stand out is her collaboration with performers. *Milestones*, her 2024 violin concerto for Philippe Quint (recorded with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra under Andrew Litton, out on the Pentatone label) has already had multiple performances around the world – and Wallen has been to each of them. 'The travelling has taken up a lot of time, but it's been hugely rewarding,' she says. 'I feel it's enriched my experience of being a composer.' *Milestones* is released concurrently with a Resonus Classics label album of her orchestral works performed by the BBC Concert Orchestra under conductor John Andrews.

This past year of remarkable achievements is all the more impressive given some of the societal hurdles Wallen has had to overcome. When her Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra (written for Colin Currie in 1994) was performed at the BBC Proms in 1998, it was the first time a piece by a black female composer had been featured in the series. She's long been a champion for equality, and her latest choral work, *REIGN*, was premiered at the Royal Albert Hall on International Women's Day. The piece was commissioned by WOW (Women of the World), an initiative that Wallen has been part of since it was founded in 2010 by Jude Kelly, then artistic director of the Southbank Centre. At one of the first WOW Women in Music breakfast meetings, Wallen discussed her career, causing an aspiring freelance writer to blurt out in amazement: 'But Errollyn, how do you do all this?' The composer talked about staying power, personal development and resilience. Powerful advice from a compelling musical personality – I've never forgotten it.

Left-field learning

Despite an education steeped in the Russian tradition, noted pianist Nikolai Lugansky forged an unusual path to a stellar career, writes Tom Service

How does the world end? If it's going to be a pianistic apocalypse, at least in Nikolai Lugansky's hands, it's worth waiting for: his transcription of the 'Immolation Scene' from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* is one of the most shattering experiences that any pianist has created, making the impossible a reality. Lugansky somehow clarifies and amplifies the power of Wagner's incomprehensibly rich maelstrom of motives, textures and colours, with the ache and radiance of the redemption-through-love melody soaring through the performance on his latest all-Wagner album for Harmonia Mundi.

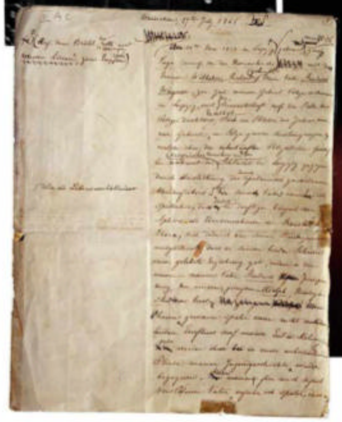
The intensity of this encounter with Wagner's music began when Lugansky was in his teens in Moscow, studying at the Central Music School. In the late 1980s and early '90s, during *Perestroika* and the end of the Soviet Union, the biggest influences on his life weren't the pianists, but the orchestras who came to Moscow. He remembers, in particular, a Mahler Fifth Symphony with Barenboim and the Orchestre de Paris, and a Bruckner Eighth from Georg Solti and the Chicago Symphony that changed his life. And with the money he earnt on tour, he saved up for as many CDs as he could. As he says in his Wagner album notes, 'With the little money I had, I bought myself a CD of excerpts from the *Ring* with the Cleveland Orchestra conducted by George Szell on one of my first trips abroad. It was a revelation, and Wagner has never ceased to fascinate me ever since.'

Having the privilege of seeing him bring about the end of the *Ring* cycle at close quarters in Radio 3's studios was its own revelation of the stunning paradoxes of Lugansky's playing and his relationship with Wagner. This apocalypse is conjured not with theatrical histrionics but an analytical serenity, in which it's the musical momentum that counts – as well as the jaw-dropping virtuosity of prestidigitation and imagination as Lugansky unleashes the forces of water and fire from the Rhine to Valhalla.

But Lugansky's relationship with Wagner's music is very different to his relationship with Wagner the man. 'It's unbelievably interesting – and very funny,' he tells me about Wagner's autobiography, *Mein Leben*, when we meet after he's played live on the radio. 'What amazes me is that his sense of self-worth doesn't change from when he was the composer of the Symphony in C or *Rienzi*' – the Wagner of the 1830s and '40s – 'to the composer of *Tristan*. One is the work of an ordinary musician; the other, the greatest genius in history. He had this unbelievable trust in himself – that whatever he does, he will do it better than anyone. He was sure that he was the greatest German writer of all time. It's funny.'

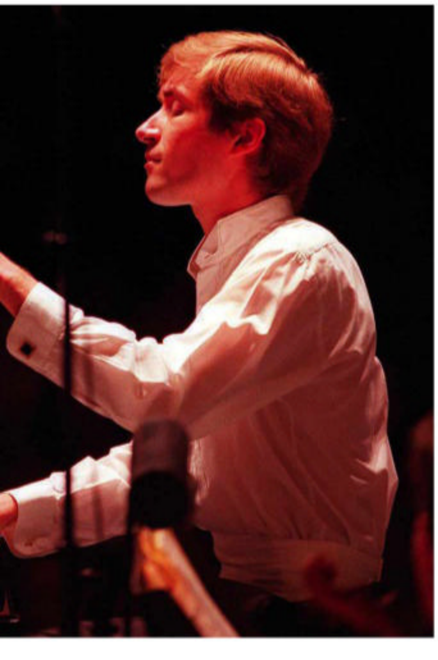
> Lugansky conjures a pianistic apocalypse not with histrionics, but analytical serenity

That hubris is the exact opposite of Lugansky's character, on- and off-stage. Rather than a certainty of his greatness, Lugansky puts himself in a tradition that goes back through a lineage of teachers, from his mentors Tatiana Nikolayeva and Tatiana Kestner to their teacher, the founder



SIMON PAULY, GETTY

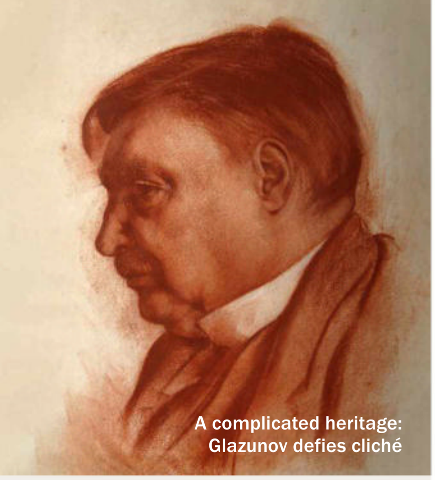
Freedom and tradition: during his education, Lugansky enjoyed the space to discover his own voice; (below left) Wagner and his autobiography, *Mein Leben*; Lugansky performs in 2000



of the Central School, Alexander Goldenweiser. Lugansky won Soviet competitions as a teenager, and the Silver Medal at the Tchaikovsky Competition in 1994 at the age of 22 (no Gold Medal was awarded that year), making him seem like the product of a Parnassian pianistic system. Lugansky, who still makes his home in Moscow, has renewed the performance tradition for Rachmaninov and is an enthusiastic advocate for Medtner and Glazunov. He remembers vividly his first concert as an eight year-old, playing Mozart's D minor Fantasy in the Small Hall of the Conservatory in Moscow; he talks of playing Schumann's *Arabeske* at his debut a few months later in the Great Hall, the stage where he would later win the Tchaikovsky.

And yet Lugansky's life, training and priorities are much less conventional than they seem. He remembers those concerts because he was 'not only excited, but nervous. And usually for these kinds of prodigies, it's not a problem for them. This quality is typical for future virtuosos, which I didn't have.' Lugansky's route into the Central School was also not conventional. His parents are scientists who met in Moscow, and there was no piano in the household, just an organola, a harmonium-like instrument that Luganksy as a very young child would play by ear. In the village outside Moscow where the family had their dacha in the summer months, there was just one upright piano among the 15 houses. It was owned by the teacher Sergei Ipatov, who humoured Lugansky's parents when they brought their six year-old to him. Ipatov prepared for another Russian version of 'Don't put your daughter on the stage, Mrs Worthington', but was astonished when the tiny Nikolai played a movement from the Second of Beethoven's Op. 49 Sonatas. After being taught by Ipatov, Lugansky joined the Central Music School just a year later.

Luganksy talks warmly and nostalgically about the Soviet education system, the fact



A complicated heritage: Glazunov defies cliché

A rich tapestry

Russia's cultural traditions

Nikolai Lugansky, Russian pianist: that's already enough to give Western audiences particular associations with what kind of player he might be. The special dark soul of Russian literature from Dostoevsky to Tolstoy; the sound of that darkness in musical action, from Mussorgsky to Tchaikovsky to Shostakovich; the brilliant piano playing whose power comes from a Soviet production line of virtuosity… But Lugansky keeps reminding me throughout our conversation that the diversity of Russian music defeats any cliché that the Western world has about Russian culture.

Among Lugansky's current obsessions are Alexander Glazunov, whose symphonies and ballets he adores, as well as his two piano sonatas – music that breathes a totally different air to Dostoevsky or Shostakovich in its clarity and lack of tortured subjectivity – and Nikolai Medtner, whose Third Piano Concerto is a personal favourite of his. With all that richness, Lugansky says, 'If you ask me to say what the main thing in Russian music is – I don't know.'

Of course, he knows more than nearly anyone – and the answer is found in that kaleidoscopic richness instead of a single headline of emotional torment that Western imaginations still like to think defines the sound of a nation's history.

MARCO BORGGREVE, GETTY

Clear-eyed communicator: (left) Lugansky likes to forge an emotional bond with his audiences; (below) his teacher Tatiana Nikolayeva connected him to the Russian tradition

that opportunities could be given to him or to any talented child wherever they were in Russia: there was a route to the Central School whether you lived in Moscow or Vladivostok. But Lugansky didn't have a hothouse education from Tatiana Kestner. In the late 1970s and early '80s the great pedagogue was often ill. 'Imagine: I was not from a musical family, but it was sometimes weeks I had to practise for myself. There were examinations when I was nine or ten, playing pieces that I hadn't worked on with my teacher. From an early age I had to be responsible.' It was up to him to motivate himself and to find his own way to practise. That philosophy of self-reliance continued after Kestner's death, when he was taught by Tatiana Nikolayeva, whose worldwide tours again meant his musical fate was in his own hands.

That's one reason for Lugansky's avoidance of dogma but also for his absolute commitment to the music he's playing, and that gives his playing its authority and inspiration. In all of his Rachmaninov recordings – of the solo music and the concertos – there's an uncanny sense of being inside the music, hearing multiple dimensions of harmony and feeling at once. And counterpoint: for Lugansky, Rachmaninov is a Bach-like composer, who writes harmonic lines that live 'parallel lives' simultaneously. 'It's not homophonic music, and in that way it's different from Chopin or Schumann.' That's just one of the revelations that happens when a musician of Lugansky's perception is allowed to develop their musicianship as freely as possible.

Lugansky has more to say on where this musical vision comes from: 'More of the great virtuosos spent a lot of hours with their instrument until they were 18 or 19. And I as a teacher will tell you the same' – Lugansky is now a professor at the Moscow Conservatory – 'that this is the moment when you either become a virtuoso or not. I spent this period differently. I spent hours and hours listening to music.' And especially all those CDs he toiled to afford in the late 1980s and early '90s. 'That was such a joy, that hardly compared with other joys in life.'

And this is all connected with another surprise that Lugansky reveals. He doesn't talk of suffering from anxiety or nerves, but says he has 'never felt that for me it was so easy' on stage. 'Of course, experience helps, but I cannot say that these days I'm sure it will be fine.' Lugansky isn't questioning his technical security or his interpretative vision. Instead, he's talking about the essential reason he gives concerts: the depth of communication he wants to create between himself and his listeners. 'It's a very intimate dream in every concert to find a listener. Any concert needs one soul; it's always between two persons. It doesn't matter if the numbers in the audience are one, ten or a thousand. It's a communication between those personalities. This is the big difference between a classical concert and a rock concert. Rock music doesn't need a single listener, it needs a big audience. And if I can be arrogant' – he's not, but this is the closest Lugansky comes to a personal vindication of how he has lived his musical life – 'for me it might be a bit easier than for others to find this connection because of my experiences. I hope that one person, or five, or a hundred will have the joy that I feel and have felt in music.'

Forged in that place of freedom from ideology but responsibility to the bigger world of music, all those traditions of composition and performance burn brighter in Luganksy's concerts and records. He finds a plumbline to the deepest truths that connect all of us music-lovers: 'When you listen to music and your heart starts to beat differently, that's how it was 50 years ago, 300 years ago. It's like first love, when you see your baby, when you see your mother. While everything else changes – whether you're buying a CD or listening to a digital recording – that essential quality of music stays forever.'

SOUTHBANK
CENTRE

THIS IS

CLASSICAL
MUSIC

IN THE 21ST CENTURY

BOOK NOW

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025/26

LOTTERY FUNDED

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

And relax...

The music that calms us can be deeply personal, writes Claire Jackson, yet certain universal elements are scientifically proven to ease stress

Once dinner is over and the dishes are cleared, we settle on the sofa to unwind. Elgar's *Mina* is playing; gentle string melodies emerge, furnished with delicate percussion. Jaws unclench and muscles relax as we are ensconced in the light music. A flash of green and pink at the window is accompanied by a loud gun-shot sound. The night sky is filled with glittering chandeliers. Inside, too, sparks fly. I turn up Debussy's *Rêverie* and plump a cushion. My companion settles once more, soothed by the rippling piano. Recent studies have shown how certain music can lower cortisol, colloquially known as the stress hormone, resulting in various different applications. It's the reason why, every Bonfire Night, Diwali, New Year – and any other time fireworks are prevalent – many cat and dog lovers turn to dedicated playlists to comfort their furry companions, who often find the stimuli overwhelming.

> 'Bach's steady quavers and tidy cadences satisfy innate musical anticipation, reducing anxiety'

Such soundtracks – 'Music for guinea pigs, hamsters and rabbits' on Apple Music features tinny recordings of the 'Moonlight' Sonata, the theme to Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and Liszt's *Liebestraum* No. 3 – naturally focus on pieces with a slow pace and on-beat rhythms to reduce agitation. Classic FM's *Pet Classics* programme is co-curated with the RSPCA and includes music such as 'Sheep may safely graze' (Bach). The steady quavers and tidy cadences satisfy innate musical anticipation, reducing anxiety. Humans can derive benefit alongside their animals: with the sheep happy in their field there is no need to count them jumping over stiles during restless nights.

GETTY

NAXOS
Peter Breiner
CARESSING YOUR SOUL
Calm Romantic Piano Music
NAXOS
Peter Breiner
MORNINGS, EVENINGS AND LATE NIGHTS
Calm Romantic Piano Music

Feel the (steady) beat: relaxing music can be helpful for humans – and our furry friends; (below) Chad Lawson and his album *breathe*; (top right) Peter Breiner and his calming recordings

This therapeutic benefit of music is not a new discovery. Parents have sung to calm their children since time immemorial, with the lullaby becoming an established format during Romanticism. From Brahms's *Wiegenlied*, a cradle song dedicated to his friend Bertha Faber on the birth of her second son, to the *Seal Lullaby* by Eric Whitacre, there exists a broad sleep-inducing soundtrack. Of course, the lullaby is not purely didactic; Brahms's song – intertwined melodies set to words about seeing paradise in one's dreams – is a thinly veiled love letter to Faber. Nonetheless, the main theme has been associated with relaxation ever since. It's one of the first pieces of music I ever encountered: as a toddler I owned a stuffed rabbit that played a synthetic version of the tune on repeat, which I'm sure wasn't at all annoying to the adults.

As more people engage with their mental health, so grow new audiences for restful classical music. It's the reason why Radio 3 Unwind has recently joined the BBC's array of stations (see p13), and why Classic FM has just launched one of two new sister stations, Classic FM Calm, focusing entirely on soothing soundscapes. I download the app of the latter and write this listening to Martin James Bartlett playing Bach's 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring', having previously heard Ólafur Arnalds's *Momentary*. My resting heartbeat is low, and I realise I've been looking out of the window for several minutes. A 'compare the meerkat' advert brings me out of this daydream.

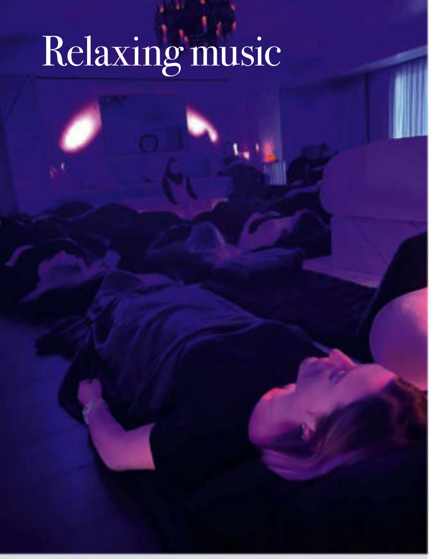
Of course, one person's salve is another's sore – and what works one day might not have the same impact the next. Calm may turn to melancholy or irritation. Emotional pliability is part of being human – although it would be useful for particular music to guarantee a given response, things are rarely so simple. 'We process music as individuals, so two people could have very different reactions to the same piece,' says Clare Maddocks, a neurologic music therapist who is the director of education and research for the British Association for Music Therapy (BAMT). 'What's soothing for one person might aggravate another.'

Music is well established as a cradle-to-grave psychological clinical intervention; while its use goes far beyond simply calming, achieving such a state can be a useful place to start. Memory is often tied up in melody – hence its use in some types of rehabilitation – so certain pieces or genres are to be avoided. 'The classic example is music played at a funeral,' explains Maddocks. 'It can be very potent hearing that work again afterwards, even years later.' I think of my father's funeral service, for which I selected violinist Jennifer Pike's recording of *The Lark Ascending* (with the Chamber Orchestra of New York and Salvatore Di Vittorio) because together we'd heard her play the music in concert. Vaughan Williams's poignancy stings, and I actively avoid listening to it.

To get around such associations, therapists often improvise their own music during sessions. 'I use a simple patten, perhaps just four chords, and a very predictable rhythm,' says Maddocks. 'Complex harmony requires more processing and taking on more stimulation when you may be over-stimulated.' Regulation is key to feeling calm. 'When you become dis-regulated, you might experience a sense of anxiety and physical responses such as sweating, goose bumps and digestion issues,' says Maddocks. 'Your body is tapping into an ancient part of the brain that has evolved to respond when it senses threat.'

In clinical settings, therapists often use a single instrument, even paring back sound to an untuned beat. Human bipedalism has much to do with which pulses we find appealing. Our ability to walk upright on two feet with a

chad lawson
breathe
GUIDED BREATHWORK EDITION



Perfect calm: enveloped by music

Soaked in sound

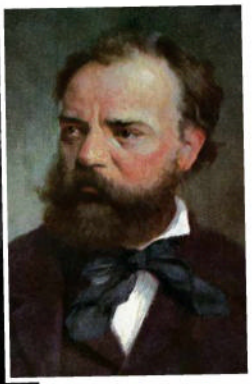
The relaxing sound bath

The phrases are long and unyielding; one note gently gives away to another. The drone music is made by sound bowls, large crystal forms in graduating size. The musician sits at the front of the darkened room, moving between the instruments. A chime calls; an audience member snores. It's not as rude as it might be in other concerts: while sleep is not the objective during a sound bath, it is quite likely as the body moves into deeper relaxation.

Settled on deliciously soft cushions, our focus is on the variety of vibrations. We're free to close our eyes, to stretch, to breathe. I've attended several concerts where the audience is laid down (Morton Feldman's five-hour epic *For Philip Guston* at Aldeburgh Festival; Christina McMaster's *Lie Down and Listen* series); the impact on concentration is remarkable.

That's the purpose of a sound bath – once engaged with the music, body and mind can achieve a deep state of restoration. The performer brings in some traditional instruments from Peru, including a shaker made from walnut shells. Other sound baths at the Mandrake Hotel in London (themandrake.com/spiritual-wellbeing-programme) feature gongs and infrared lights. I leave revitalised.

GETTY, COURTESY OF THE MANDRAKE HOTEL



Bark at the keyboard: (far left) Glenn Gould, with his dog Nickey in 1947, was famous for his *Goldberg Variations*, the go-to calming choice for Peter Breiner; (left) Dvořák's music is a streaming success

regular gait plays a big part in music, and that motion links to emotion. Dance music raises the heart rate from 60-100 beats per minute (BPM) to over 140BPM (*Vivace*), producing correlating physical responses such as sweating, adrenaline and an elevated or, if you're lucky, euphoric mood. Music marked at *Andante* – at a walking pace – or slower has the opposite effect. Taking it to its most basic level, an untuned percussive tap at 40-45BPM (*Largo*) can reduce fight-or-flight responses. It's used as part of Emotional Freedom Technique – known as tapping or psychological acupressure – where practitioners, often those suffering from PTSD, gently drum various parts of their body while working through affirmations.

> A brisk *Vivace* raises the heart rate, while a gentle *Largo* can have the opposite effect

Outside of healthcare, some composers set out to write music with a purely calming purpose. Pianist-composer Chad Lawson's pulsing melodies – often played on a piano with additional felt to dampen the timbre – have titles such as *Sanctuary* and *this is me trying*, while his 2022 album *breathe* was created to help listeners relax. The music is combined with meditation and mindfulness chat on Lawson's podcast *Calm It Down*. The improvisatory, flowing style can also be heard in Peter Breiner's work, which includes several albums with the strapline 'Calm Romantic Piano Music' (*Mornings, Evenings and Late Nights*; *Caressing Your Soul*). Breiner's sidestep into this world grew out of pandemic isolation and chimed with listener's needs – the simple, pretty melodies in *Keep Going* and *Monday Morning* have a gentle yearning that doesn't ever overpower. Not only do people want to hear this type of piano music; they want to play it, too. Breiner's calming series is sold in sheet music form and played around the world.

'Harmonically, there are no surprises – nothing atonal,' says Breiner, who has recorded dozens of albums, encompassing everything from Baroque arrangements of the Beatles to collections of national anthems. 'There are no virtuosic passages and frequent use of ostinatos. Dynamics remain in the lower range and the tempo is gentle.' For his next set of calming compositions, out in May, Breiner uses a richer palette. 'It's a little more sophisticated, taking inspiration from Debussy to Bartók.' It also references Dvořák, whose piano arrangements have been a surprise streaming success for Breiner – the third movement of Dvořák's Eighth Symphony has over 27 million plays on Spotify alone. 'My teacher's teacher worked with Dvořák,' explains Breiner. 'So, he's something of a compositional grandfather to me.'

It can be frustrating to hear someone – usually a celebrity or MP – claim that they enjoy classical music because they find it 'calming'. Max Richter's *Exiles* and Bach's 'Air on the G String' (Classic FM Calm is back on again) is no more representative of an artform than Jeff Koons's *Balloon Dog* and Rembrandt's self-portraits. When Satie composed his *Gymnopédies* and *Gnossiennes*, he aimed to distil melody into its purest form; to engage rather than clear the mind. Often, that deep engagement can be the most nutritious form of relaxation. No-one had gone to the London Sinfonietta's recent Boulez/Cage concert at Southbank's Purcell Room with the idea that it would be restful. Yet, as clarinettist Mark van de Wiel moved around the music stands set out in a circle, there was a collective stillness. But Boulez's *Domaines* is unlikely to appear in any calming playlists, which nearly always feature one composer: Bach. 'My go-to music is the theme from the *Goldberg Variations*,' says Breiner. 'That heals everything.' A good choice, too, for any guinea pigs, hamsters and rabbits that happen to be in the vicinity.

REVEALING THE UNHEARD

Exhilarating new releases championing visionary composers past and present

GWENDELINE LUMARET PLAYS NAJI HAKIM

Naji Hakim: A New Voice for the Cello

Gwendeline Lumaret illuminates Hakim's fusion of Western classical and Middle Eastern traditions in this collection of solo and chamber works. Featuring all world premiere recordings, the album showcases intricate rhythms, rich harmonies, and vibrant cross-cultural dialogues, making it a significant addition to the contemporary cello repertoire.

métier
MEX 77130

A CELLO GALAXY OF BRITISH WOMEN COMPOSERS
CATHERINE WILMERS, CELLO
JILL MORTON, PIANO
divine art
DDX 21134

A Cello Galaxy of British Women Composers brings to light twelve premiere recordings by long-overlooked composers. Lost for decades, these works were sidelined by prejudice, not merit. With pianist Jill Morton, Catherine Wilmers ensures their voices are finally heard.

RODNEY LISTER
OF MERE BEING
CHORAL WORKS
métier
MEX 77111

Rodney Lister's choral works unite literary depth with harmonic richness, evolving from diatonic clarity to intricate textures. This recording brings poetic texts to life with rhythmic nuance and tonal color. A striking blend of tradition and innovation, capturing the warmth of Lister's distinctive voice.

WWW.DIVINEARTRECORDS.COM

Music Classical · Spotify · amazon · prestomusic · TIDAL · qobuz

---

Fishguard Festival of Music
Gŵyl Gerdd Abergwaun

2025

18th - 31st July

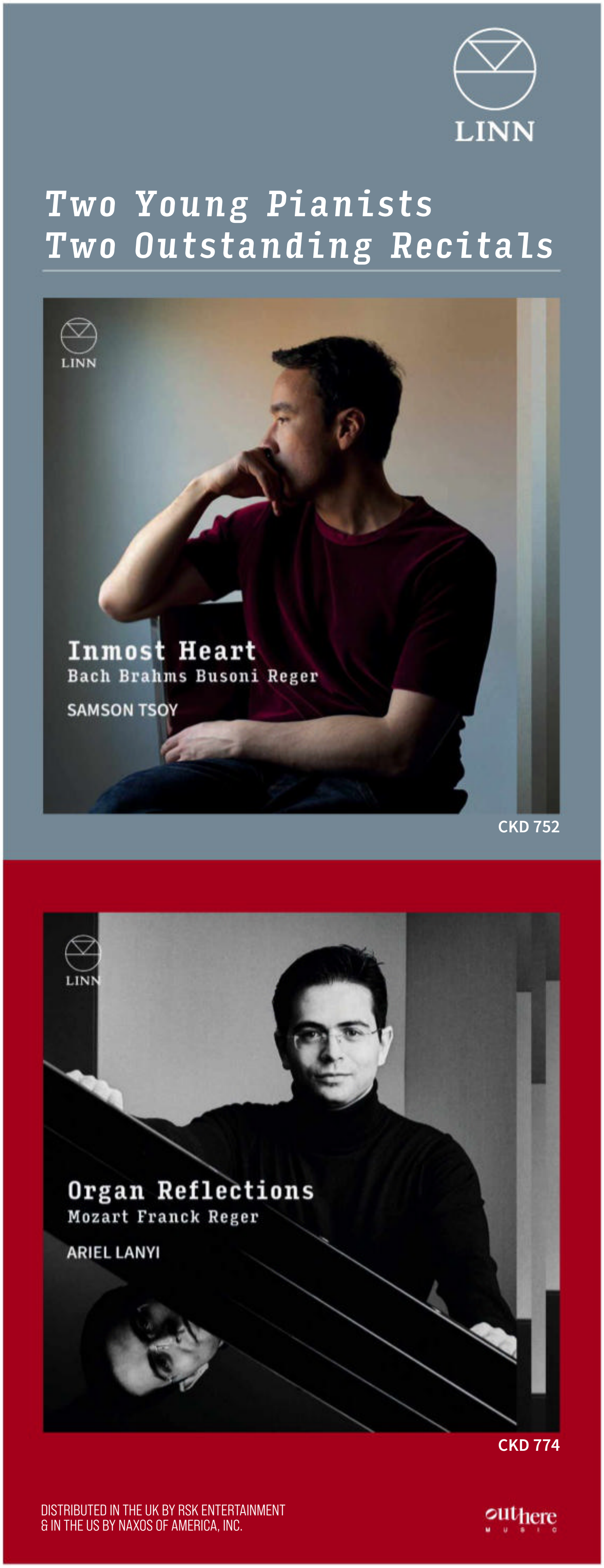
To include:

Orchestra of Welsh National Opera
Kosmos Ensemble
Laura van der Heijden (cello) & Jâms Coleman (piano)
WNO Chamber Ensemble
Mared Pugh-Evans (harp)
Ryan Vaughan Davies (tenor) & David Doidge (piano)
Aquarelle Guitar Quartet
Geoff Eales Trio
Cadi Glwys (triple harp)
Delia Stephens & Will Pound
National Youth Orchestra of Wales

"A wonderfully varied and uniformly impressive series of concerts."

Programme and tickets: www.fishguardmusicfestival.com

Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru
Arts Council of Wales
ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI
LOTTERY FUNDED
GWENDOLINE AND MARGARET DAVIES CHARITY



LINN

Two Young Pianists
Two Outstanding Recitals

LINN
Inmost Heart
Bach Brahms Busoni Reger
SAMSON TSOY

CKD 752

LINN
Organ Reflections
Mozart Franck Reger
ARIEL LANYI

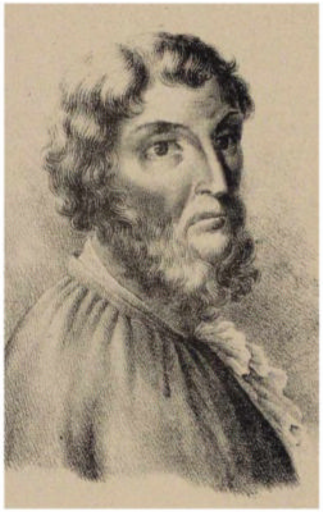
CKD 774

DISTRIBUTED IN THE UK BY RSK ENTERTAINMENT
& IN THE US BY NAXOS OF AMERICA, INC.

outhere music

Perfect peace

The *BBC Music* team and reviewers on the music they turn to for a sense of calm



Serene sounds: (above) Renaissance master Morales will put you in the mood for sax; (top) Einaudi's *I Giorni* ('The Days') is a night-time balm

Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 5, 'Emperor' – *Adagio un poco mosso*

As a violinist, there are plenty of contemplative middle movements of string concertos that I find soothing. But it's the middle movement of Beethoven's 'Emperor' that really helps me to a state of muscle-relaxing peace: the warm, glowing strings of the opening, the plucked steps down in the cellos, and the entry of the cool piano, delicately tracing a scale-like passage from the top of the keyboard. For the most beautifully pure piano and velvety strings, look no further than Krystian Zimerman's 2021 interpretation with the London Symphony Orchestra under Simon Rattle, recorded during the pandemic. Music to help us through dark days, then and now. *Charlotte Smith*

Brahms Intermezzo, Op. 118 No. 2

Whenever I need to soothe churned-up emotions, I turn to Brahms's Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 No. 2, a tender jewel for solo piano. Sometimes I'll play this short piece myself, comforted by the gentle rock of its opening melody, the familiar warmth and weight of its rich harmonies. It falls so well under the fingers. On other occasions, I'll listen to one of its many wonderful recordings, relishing the music's shifting moods: joyful, bittersweet, lyrical, reverential. Always, as the final cadence resolves to a beautifully spaced A major chord, I find myself calmer. *Rebecca Franks*

Ludovico Einaudi *I Giorni*

I find plaintive, meandering solo piano music really grounding ,and Einaudi's album *I Giorni* has brought me so much pleasure and peace since I was first handed a copy of it 23 years ago. I would often put it on at night, to calm a racing mind or simply soundtrack my troubles. Lying there, hearing the title track or *Melodia Africana I*, would somehow put me instantly at ease. I would imagine the piano keyboard and visualise just how each phrase was formed; it represents a kind of musical mindfulness for me, and it still works. *Michael Beek*

Enescu Octet – *Lentement*

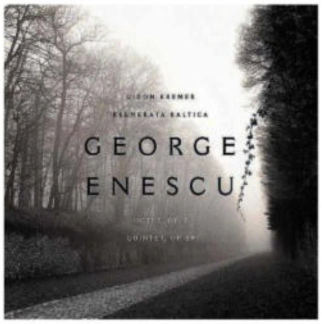
Written in 1900 when he was 19, Enescu's Octet seems to represent a forgotten corner of music history. But there's nothing dusty about it – instead it's sparkling, transparent, a tiny message of hope. The wistful *Lentement* third movement, coloured with Romanian folk modes, is full of calm and consolation. It opens like a gentle stream burbling in the shallows, stilling restless thoughts. Gradually the music swells and blazes – sun trying to emerge from the dark clouds – then it dies down again. Gidon Kremer's 2005 recording has a distant, muted acoustic that adds to the soothing effect. *Amanda Holloway*

Haydn Cello Concerto No. 1 – *Adagio*

If you are ever stuck in a traffic jam, or waiting far too long for that non-existent bus to turn up, just zone into this beautiful *Adagio* to calm your

Slowing the pulse: (left) Mantra Percussion and friends perform Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* in 2009; (below) our recommended recording's of Enescu's Octet and Beethoven's 'Emperor' Piano Concerto No. 5

GETTY



Deutsche Grammophon
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
COMPLETE PIANO CONCERTOS
LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
KRYSTIAN ZIMERMAN · SIMON RATTLE

frayed nerves. It's simply a glorious outpouring of expressive melody from first bar to last. We hear it initially on the strings and it is then taken up almost seamlessly by the solo cello whose opening entry, a discreetly sustained long note, is a stroke of compositional genius. That such wonderful music remained unknown and unperformed for nearly 200 years, until its rediscovery in the early 1960s, is quite remarkable. *Erik Levi*

Mahler Symphony No. 3 – *Langsam, Ruhevoll, Empfunden*

I'm a born fidget, and don't really do 'calm'. That said, with a half-decent single malt to hand, a luxurious late-evening listen to the *Langsam, Ruhevoll, Empfunden* final movement of Mahler's Third Symphony may just about get me to sit still and relax for a short while. Those three German words mean, roughly, 'slowly', 'tranquil' and 'with feeling', a potent combination in helping me to lose myself in the music as, over 20 gloriously unhurried minutes, we build up to the most radiant of all endings. Simply lovely. And then I get up and find something useful to do around the house. *Jeremy Pound*

Morales/Jan Garbarek
Parce Mihi Domine

A choir sings a pure, round chord. Instinctively, I breathe in. A saxophone enters, just above the voices, barely audible. I breathe out, feeling an intense sense of calm. The saxophone grows in confidence, tracing a line above the choir. Soaring up, it turns, darts, circles and resolves. It reaches a dizzying, dissonant height, piercing my very soul, and then swerves away again. In one way the sound is primitive, visceral, triggering feelings that have made it a chillout playlist favourite. In another, it's intellectual, a dialectic between opposites: comfort/pain; darkness/light; togetherness/solitude; earth/sky; past/future. The many copies and clichés that the Hilliard Ensemble and saxophonist Jan Garbarek's *Officium* album spawned on its release in 1994 were never as meaningful or original and, all these years later, it still holds its grip on me. *Ariane Todes*

Steve Reich *Music for 18 Musicians*

It's half a century since Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* was written, and its relevance has only increased in the decades since. In today's frenetic, borderline-chaotic world, 'Music for 18' offers a reassuringly orderly vision of how change can happen organically, without convulsive or violent interventions. Its timbres tingle with quietly spoken sensory and emotional nuances, its pulsing rhythms evolving slowly in a measured and democratic fashion. The effect is cosseting and immersive, soothing the frazzled senses and somehow renewing hopefulness for the future. My recommended recording? The Colin Currie Group. *Terry Blain*

Schubert *Wandrers Nachtlied,* D768

Goethe's poem has received settings by composers from Loewe to Ives and Howells, but the very simplicity of Schubert's version lifts it into another sphere.The reflective poem is a short description of a night-time, natural scene that leads to a final, poignant reminder of mortality. In his version – just 14 bars long, with mostly straightforward harmony and a few delicate gestures depicting the slight movements of nature – Schubert encapsulates the nocturnal stillness and the listener's sudden, inescapable contemplation of the death of the song's creators, the artists performing it and oneself too. The effect is movingly consolatory. *George Hall*

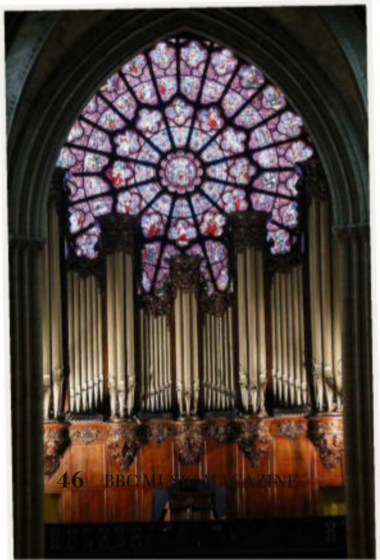
Tallis *Spem in alium*

Whenever I listen to this English Renaissance choral masterpiece, I am enveloped in a serene, otherworldly soundscape. Written for no fewer than 40 voices, the ten-minute work creates a vast, shimmering texture where harmonies ebb and flow like waves. The slow, cascading vocal lines blend seamlessly, evoking in me a sense of weightless suspension. It's complex, but somehow never feels chaotic – each voice moves with precision, forming this kind of celestial tapestry of sound. The gentle rise and fall of dynamics only adds to the meditative quality, leaving me with a profound sense of peace and transcendence. *Steve Wright*

> 'Tallis's slow, cascading vocal lines blend seamlessly, evoking in me a sense of weightless suspension'

Great Dame

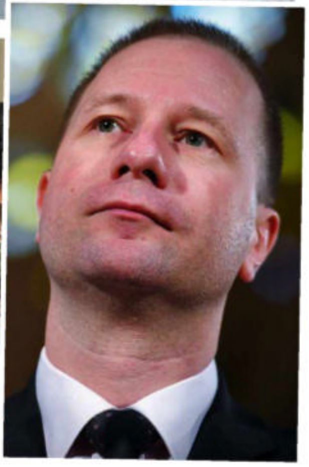
When flames engulfed Notre-Dame in 2019, the organ miraculously survived. Now cleaned and restored, it is sounding as good as ever, discovers John Allison



The evening of 15 April 2019 is impossible to forget. Many around the globe, even with no personal attachment to Paris or Notre-Dame, watched in stunned disbelief as the city's great medieval cathedral was engulfed in flames. Though much of the world's bad news now feels almost predictable, this disaster seemed to strike out of nowhere; people will always remember where they were when the news broke, especially, perhaps, if they were admirers of the famous organ in which so much of the building's soul feels invested. But if the world felt heartbroken, imagine the emotions of those closely connected to Notre-Dame, above all the organists who not only play a starring role in its life, but spend more time than anyone else alone, communing with the building, practising when the rest of Paris is going to sleep.

For Vincent Dubois, one of the titular organists of Notre-Dame de Paris, that night remains etched into his memory. But like many deeply affected by the event, he was not even in the city. 'I was actually in my car in Strasbourg, where I live,' he recalls when we meet in the organ loft at Notre-Dame in mid-April, almost exactly six years after the fire. 'At the time I was the director of the Strasbourg Conservatoire and I was heading from the office to my house when I got a call from Johann Vexo, a choir organist here. I've known Johann for 25 years and I'd never heard his voice like that. I asked him what was wrong, and he said he'd just escaped from the organ loft – he'd been playing the service when flames and smoke were spotted, and the alarm was raised. He told me, "I can't look at it; I'm going home, but you must switch on your TV."

'It was just horrible. I went extremely pale. I couldn't believe what was happening and just had to hope that the walls were going to hold and



Sounding swell: (main) Vincent Dubois plays the organ of Notre-Dame de Paris; (anti-clockwise, from left) the cathedral in flames, 2019; horrified onlookers; Johann Vexo was at the organ at the time; (below) Franck features on a new celebratory recording; (opposite) the restored organ

RAPHAEL WERTHEIMER/WARNER CLASSICS 2025, GETTY

that the organ would survive. I was really scared when I saw the flames spreading to the towers, because if the bells had fallen down, everything would have collapsed. We organists were on the phone to each other all night, talking and seeing who had the latest news. It felt very personal – like seeing the closest member of your family burning right next to you and being unable to do anything – because the cathedral and this organ belong to my life.'

Dubois has now made the first recording on the restored grand organ, an Erato release under the title *Notre-Dame de Paris: Organ* (out 5 September). Perhaps the only piece of good news to have come out of Notre-Dame in the aftermath of that fateful night was the discovery that the organ had survived the fire almost unscathed – but it still needed to be dismantled and cleaned and was put back only in time for last winter's reopening ceremonies. 'It was a miracle. We found just 20 centimetres of water on a corner of the console.' The choir organ was less lucky; indeed, it was destroyed in the fire but had been of much less historic or musical significance and, until its replacement is installed in 2028, a digital organ is standing in.

Does the restored instrument sound or feel different to Dubois? 'The sound of the high pitches has changed – they are brighter now. The big bass stops are clearer too. Because every surface in the cathedral has been cleaned we have won two seconds of acoustics when the cathedral is full – the reverberation is about four to five seconds, when before it was just two to three. When it's empty, it's about the same, like eight seconds.' All this affects his interpretations and choice of registrations. 'We have to be more careful now about using the high mutations – you know, the Septième, the Larigot and so on. Also the mixtures high and low – we should reduce our use of them a little.'

> 'I was so scared when I saw the flames spreading to the towers – if the bells had fallen down, everything would have collapsed'

Appointed in 2016 as one of three titular organists, Dubois has been in post for nine years, but between fire and plague (Covid) those years have not gone as originally envisaged, and some artistic plans have had to be revised or delayed. The duty of playing for services continued largely uninterrupted, since Notre-Dame moved its regular services across the river to Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, and Dubois worked there alongside his titular colleagues Olivier Latry and Philippe Lefebvre. 'We officially became adjunct organists of the titulaire, Michael Matthes. A very nice guy – we enjoyed a great connection with him and have stayed close friends.'

Some of Dubois's recording plans have had to be rescheduled, but this new release has of course been a priority. Its programme (unrelated to the music he played during the reopening service and concert) has been carefully designed to celebrate not only the organ but some of Notre-Dame's past organists. Naturally, most of the music is French, and though Bach is included there is even a French connection here – to the Alsatian polymath, organist and Bach scholar Albert Schweitzer, born 150 years ago and a pupil and friend of Charles-Marie Widor, also featured with his famous Toccata. César Franck is here not only for his own music but as the teacher of one of Notre-Dame's greatest incumbents, Louis Vierne.

Another 1875 birthday boy, Maurice Ravel, is celebrated through Dubois's own transcription of three movements from *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. 'I did it last year, directly from the piano score and, of course, only of those movements I thought would work – the "Rigaudon", "Menuet" and "Toccata". These all have strong rhythmical ideas, and the organ has a sort of percussive quality well suited to this.' The tradition of Notre-Dame organists is traced here, beginning with the *Marche des Marseillois et l'Air Ça ira* by Marie-Antoinette's teacher

Pipe major: Aristide Cavaillé-Coll

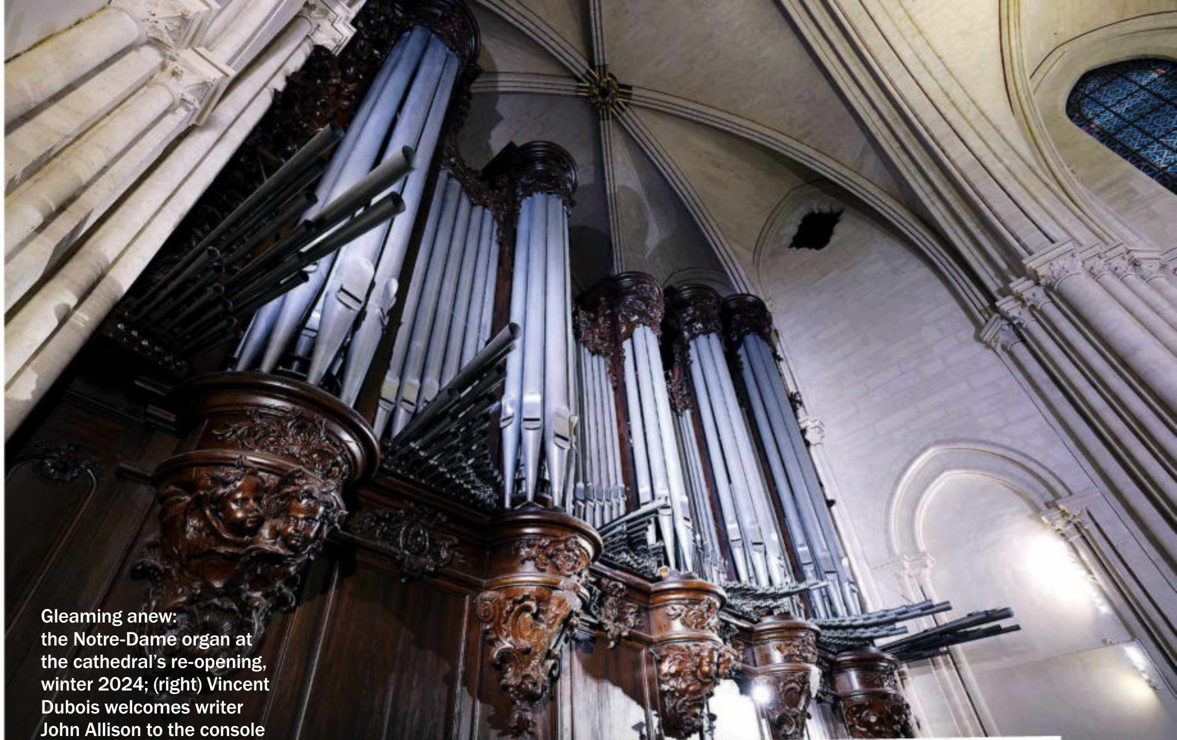
GETTY

Organ revolutionary

Aristide Cavaillé-Coll

'Mon nouvel orgue? C'est un orchestre!' Franck's famous exclamation on becoming organist at the Parisian church of Saint-Jean-Saint-François-au-Marais in 1853 encapsulates the significance of the great organ builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. When Cavaillé-Coll was born in Montpellier in 1811, organ music in France was virtually moribund, but by the time of his death in 1899, all the leading composers had written for his instruments, and it is no exaggeration to say that his organs changed the course of French music.

Though the grand organ of Notre-Dame contains many pipes dating back to before the Revolution, it is essentially a Cavaillé-Coll instrument – with all the snarl and bite that implies. Vierne's music could not have been conceived without it, but hardly any composer or town of any size was unaffected by this one-man French Revolution in music. An industrialist and visionary innovator, Cavaillé-Coll left around 500 organs in France, and further afield too. He built his first instrument in Lerida in Spain in 1829, and his organs can be found as far apart as Moscow and Caracas, with a handful in Britain; the most beautiful of these is the little instrument at Farnborough Abbey in Hampshire, built as a mausoleum for Napoleon III.



Gleaming anew: the Notre-Dame organ at the cathedral's re-opening, winter 2024; (right) Vincent Dubois welcomes writer John Allison to the console

Claude Balbastre, who survived the Revolution by playing its hymns and songs. Three successive 20th-century figures are similarly represented: Vierne, with his arrangement of Rachmaninov's Prelude in C sharp minor; Léonce de Saint-Martin with his version of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumblebee*; and Pierre Cochereau, whose *Boléro sur un thème de Charles Racquet* commemorates a Notre-Dame organist-composer of the 17th century.

'So there are, let's say, compartments in this recording,' explains Dubois. 'And one of them has to do with the organists here right across history. It's "intemporal" – I don't know the exact word in English for being outside of one time or era – and to do with what I'd call the universal repertoire of the organ.' The same is true of the organ itself, based on pipes by François Thierry dating from before the Revolution but expanded and transformed in the 1860s by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll (see left) into the formidable instrument we know today.

Notre-Dame and its organ were a beacon for Dubois already in childhood, when his mother bought him recordings made there by Cochereau. It was his first teacher, organist of the cathedral in his hometown of Saint-Brieuc on the north coast of Brittany, who in the mid-1990s arranged for the then-teenager to meet Cochereau's successor, Lefebvre. 'Philippe allowed me to play some pieces after the Saturday service. I was in such a state of shock that I couldn't eat for a week.' Becoming a student of Latry at the Paris Conservatoire further deepened his connection with Notre-Dame, but even after winning two major competitions in 2002 – Calgary and Toulouse – and embarking on an international career, he had to go through a gruelling audition process to win the post he now shares with Latry and Thierry Escaich, recently appointed after Lefebvre's retirement. Two years ago, Dubois was also appointed professor of organ interpretation and improvisation at the Hochschule für Musik in Saarbrücken.

A few hours after our interview, I return to Notre-Dame for a late-night climb to the organ loft – it's only after the cathedral's closure at night that the organ can be played without restrictions. Whether improvising or playing the most challenging repertoire from memory, Dubois exudes musicianship rare among organists – hands and feet flying with a flexibility that truly moulds the music. Looking out over the nave of the cathedral, the console – east-facing so that the organist is on an equal footing with the celebrant – may resemble a flight deck, but with Dubois at the controls it is anything but a machine. When we say *au revoir* sometime after midnight, he stays on alone to practise in a building where peace feels once again timelessly restored.

signum CLASSICS
LIFE
OLIVER DAVIS
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Julian Kershaw conductor
Will Todd
ALL WILL BE WELL
Will Todd piano | Voices of Hope | Will Todd Ensemble | Mark Edwards conductor
Elgar The Kingdom
Francesca Chiejina
Dame Sarah Connolly
Benjamin Hulett
Ashley Riches
Crouch End Festival Chorus
London Mozart Players
David Temple
Philharmonia Records
Santtu conducts Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring
CROSSING BORDERS
LA SERENISSIMA • ADRIAN CHANDLER DIRECTOR / VIOLIN

SIGCD890

SIGCD891

SIGCD896

SIGCD933

SIGCD918

Available on iTunes

Listen on Apple Music

deezer

www.signumrecords.com
Distributed by [PIAS] in the UK &
Naxos of America in the USA

prestomusic

Available at amazon

Spotify

LIGETI
KURTÁG, SCHUMANN, BRAHMS
FERNE STIMMEN
LISZT
LEGENDS
PRAYERS
POEMS
WALTZES
FÜLÖP RÁNKI
Prokofiev
Rachmaninov
Mussorgsky
Tchaikovsky
Glinka
RUSSIAN PIANO TRANSCRIPTIONS
István Lajkó
BRAHMS
VIOLIN SONATAS
Giovanni Guzzo
Zoltán Fejérvári
RACHMANINOV
RAVEL
SCRIABIN
BENEDEK HORVÁTH
piano
SCHUMANN
ALBUM FOR LITTLE AND BIG CHILDREN
SHOSTAKOVICH
FRANCK
PIANO QUINTETS
VALENTIN MAGYAR & KODÁLY QUARTET
MOZART, VERDI, WAGNER
FAVOURITE ARIAS
ISTVÁN KOVÁCS
MIKLÓS RÓZSA
COMPLETE PIANO WORKS
KRISZTINA FEJES

NEW RELEASES!

HUNGAROTON
www.hungarotonmusic.com

Spotify YouTube Music MUSIC DEEZER music TIDAL qobuz

Summer School

28 July – 2 August 2025

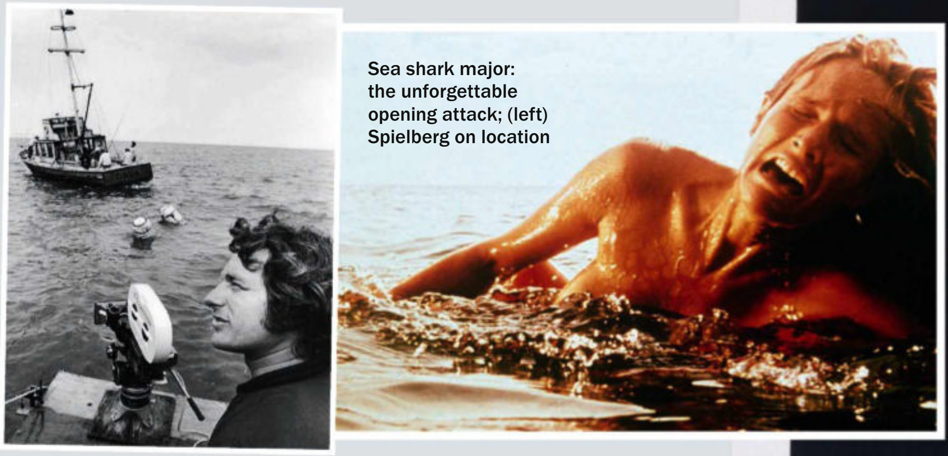
A new and inspiring week-long course for young musicians aged 11-16. Residential and non-residential places available for players of string instruments, piano, harp and classical guitar.

Yehudi Menuhin School

SCAN ME

Soundbites!

As Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* celebrates 50 years old, Charlotte Smith explores the vital role played by John Williams's famously unsettling soundtrack



Sea shark major: the unforgettable opening attack; (left) Spielberg on location

GETTY, ALAMY

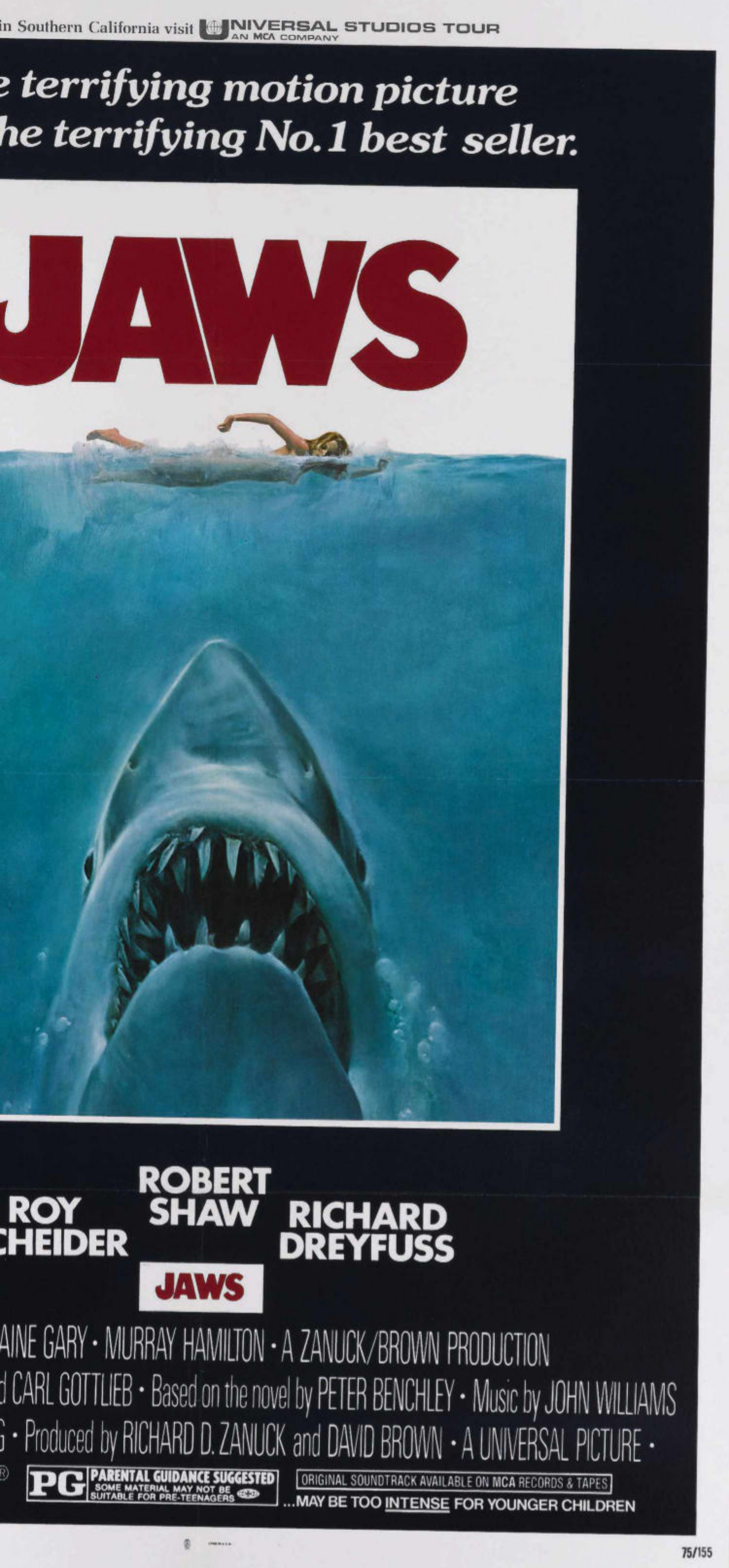
The setting sun illuminates the rippling waves of a dark and fathomless ocean. A young woman confidently swims out from the shore to where a buoy bobs up and down serenely. 'Come on in the water!' she shouts joyfully to her male companion, who has collapsed drunkenly on the sand, unable to remove his shoes. As the woman treads water, a low, rumbling semitone from E to F starts up in the film's accompanying soundtrack. Gradually, as the camera moves from the depths below towards the woman on the surface, this two-note ostinato, played by basses and cellos, becomes louder, faster and more urgent, until a sudden, shrieking chord sounds, as she's jerked down by an unseen force. As the attack takes place, the soundtrack erupts into violent dissonance – followed by near-total silence, punctuated by the gentle bell of the buoy, as the woman finally disappears beneath the waves.

So begins *Jaws*, based on the novel by Peter Benchley – the film that made a star of its young director Steven Spielberg and coined the phrase 'blockbuster' upon its release in 1975, 50 years ago this month. Principal shooting on the open seas was notoriously difficult, down in no small part to the movie's mechanical 'star' – the shark that terrorises the small, tight-knit community of the fictional Amity Island. Affectionately named 'Bruce' after Spielberg's lawyer, the model shark (in fact, three prototypes constructed from steel and polyurethane) suffered constant malfunctions, causing shooting to balloon from 55 to 159 days. Thus, one of the most joyously frightening films of all time might have become the ultimate damp squib were it not for its soundtrack, composed by one John Williams.

It was Williams's ingenious musical method of signifying the shark's presence that lent a feeling of menace to many of the film's earlier scenes – without even a glimpse of its antagonist. Indeed, we only finally see the shark in its full glory one hour and 21 minutes into the two-hour film – and 'Bruce' himself gets just four minutes of screen time. To this day, the importance of the soundtrack is not lost on Spielberg, as he revealed in a recent documentary for Disney: 'I had a shark that didn't work, but thankfully John's musical shark worked a lot better than my mechanical shark. I think that his score is responsible for half the success of the film.'

It's fair to say, however, that Spielberg's initial impression of Williams's music was less than

When
The
from t
SC
Co-starring LORR
Screenplay by PETER BENCHLEY an
Directed by STEVEN SPIELBER
TECHNICOLOR® PANAVISION
COPYRIGHT ©1975 BY UNIVERSAL PICTURES COUNTRY OF ORIGIN U.S.A.


in Southern California visit UNIVERSAL STUDIOS TOUR
AN MCA COMPANY
e terrifying motion picture
he terrifying No. 1 best seller.
JAWS
ROY
CHEIDER
ROBERT
SHAW
RICHARD
DREYFUSS
JAWS
AINE GARY · MURRAY HAMILTON · A ZANUCK/BROWN PRODUCTION
d CARL GOTTLIEB · Based on the novel by PETER BENCHLEY · Music by JOHN WILLIAMS
G · Produced by RICHARD D. ZANUCK and DAVID BROWN · A UNIVERSAL PICTURE ·
PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED
SOME MATERIAL MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR PRE-TEENAGERS
ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE ON MCA RECORDS & TAPES
...MAY BE TOO INTENSE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN
75/155

Better check the bite radius: (top) *Jaws* stars Robert Shaw, Roy Scheider and Richard Dreyfuss; director Steven Spielberg chats to composer John Williams

enthusiastic. The two had previously worked together on Spielberg's first theatrical release, *The Sugarland Express* (1974). Williams, by this time in his 40s, already had a long list of television and film credits to his name, and the young Spielberg had fallen in love with his musical language upon hearing the soundtrack to the 1969 Steve McQueen vehicle *The Reivers*. Their experience together on *Sugarland* was wholly positive, leaving Spielberg determined 'to use John on every film I would ever make'.

It was therefore with great anticipation that Spielberg visited Williams to hear his first ideas for *Jaws*, performed on the composer's own piano. 'I had this esoteric idea of what the score should be, and I had temp-tracked the picture with John's own score from Robert Altman's

All at sea: (right; l-r) Robert Shaw (Quint), Roy Scheider (Brody), director Steven Spielberg and Richard Dreyfuss (Hooper) share a laugh on deck during the film's lengthy filming; (below) Spielberg with John Williams, 2024

Images,' remembers Spielberg. 'John called me after he had seen the rough cut of *Jaws*, and he was laughing about my temp music. He said, "Oh no. Sweetie, this is a pirate movie. It's primal, but it's also fun and entertaining. Don't worry, I'm going to come up with something."

'So, when he finally played the music for me on the piano, I expected to hear something weird and melodic, tonal but eerie and of another world – like outer space, but inner space, under the water. What he played for me instead, with two fingers on the lower piano keys, was the two-note theme. Dun-dun, dun-dun, dun-dun. I thought he was joking! But he kept asking me to listen again, and I started to see the brilliance of his motif. The best ideas can be simplest ones, and John had found a signature for the entire score.'

When it came to recording the score with orchestra – on the 20th Century Fox Studio Scoring Stage in Los Angeles on 3, 4 and 10 March 1975 – the genius of this signature was revealed with even greater potency. 'I thought that altering the speed and volume of the theme, from very slow to very fast, from very soft to very loud, would indicate the mindless attacks of the shark,' explained Williams in his booklet notes for the soundtrack's 25th anniversary release. Hence that low ostinato was used to indicate not only the presence of the shark, but the level of danger. There are even moments where the absence of this signature to accompany an apparent sighting of the beast gives the audience a subconscious clue that this is a false alarm.

But more than this, the insistent thematic pulse was a way to characterise an ancient monster – perhaps even, it has been suggested by several academics, its heartbeat. Like Bernard Herrmann's *Psycho*, whose screeching musical theme had signified violence and terror before it, *Jaws* was tapping into a primal menace against which all reason and intellect is no protection.

Of course, the *Jaws* soundtrack is much more than its signature ostinato. That rumbling main theme also features a chromatic tuba motif, written in a far higher register than is comfortable for the instrument. When tuba player Tommy Johnson questioned Williams about the range, the composer responded that he felt that discomfort would be 'more threatening'.

Early in the score, music played by the Amity Marching Band, an amateur ensemble assembled for the fictional town's parade, was recorded by professional trumpeters Malcolm McNab and Graham Young, alongside Williams on trombone and Spielberg himself on clarinet, deliberately playing slightly out of tune.

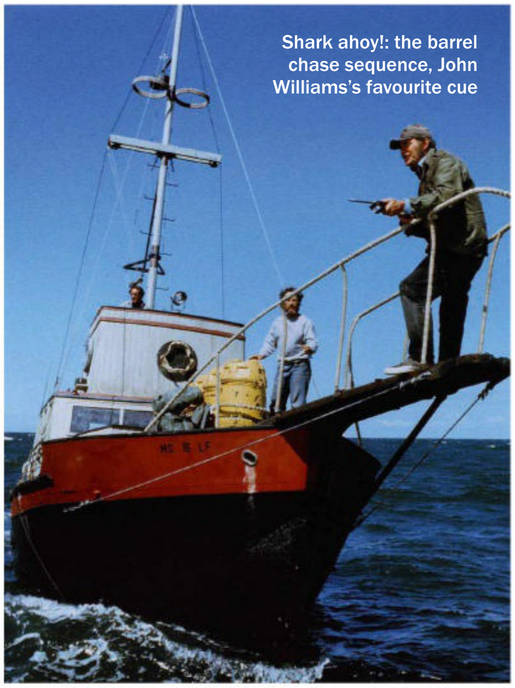
> 'What he played for me, with two fingers on the lower piano keys, was a two-note theme. Dun-dun, dun-dun, dun-dun. I thought he was joking!'

The film's three heroes – Brody (Roy Scheider), Hooper (Richard Dreyfuss) and Quint (Robert Shaw) – who like *Moby Dick*'s Captain Ahab embark on an exciting nautical quest to hunt their own 'white whale', are given several rousing themes to accompany their journey. When their boat, the *Orca*, sails away from Amity Island, the soundtrack incorporates an old sea shanty called 'Spanish Ladies', a favourite tune of Quint's. And once the chase is on, this musical subject turns intrepid and thrilling, Williams weaving together various musical motifs. 'It suddenly becomes very Korngoldian,' noted Williams in a 2012 interview marking the film's first release on Blu-ray. 'You expect to see Errol Flynn at the helm of this thing. It gave us a laugh.'

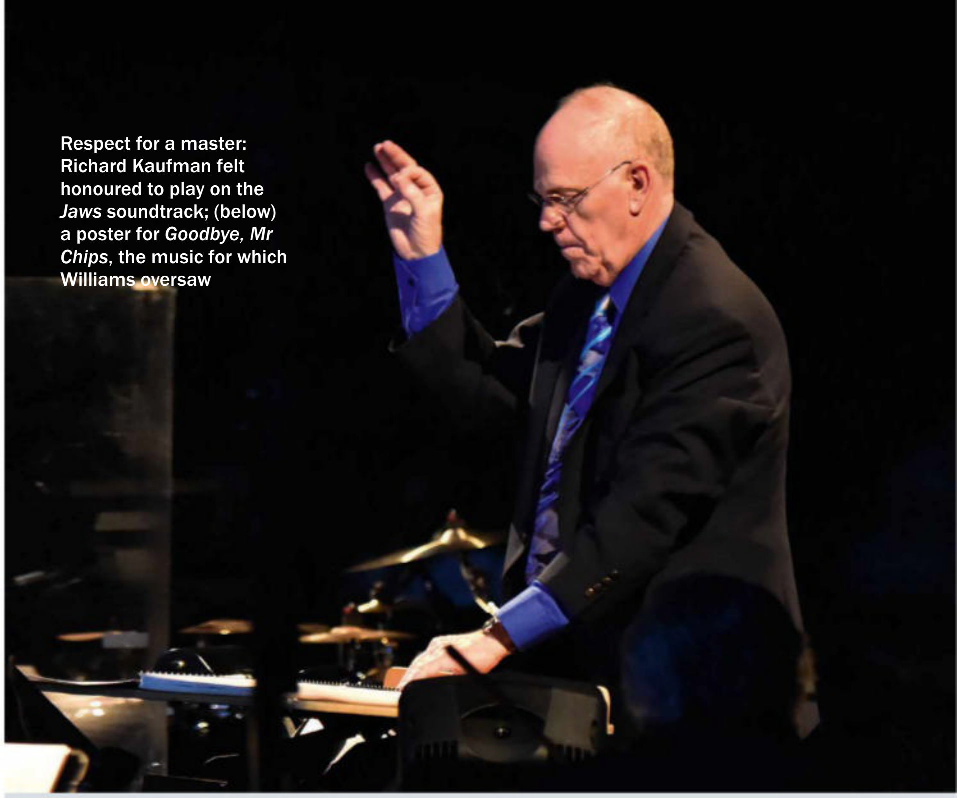
As the stakes raise, and the men seem to be losing their battle, Williams heightens the sense of drama with a fugue to accompany the building of the shark cage and the subsequent final showdown. It's an appropriate musical device, illustrating the complexity of the human mind, employing every sophisticated trick in its arsenal against the savage force of nature.

For Williams, those sequences at sea hold the most interest: 'My favourite cue has always been the barrel chase sequence, where the shark approaches the boat and the three heroes think they have captured it,' he says. 'The music accelerates and becomes very exciting and heroic. Suddenly the shark overpowers them and eventually escapes, the music deflates and ends with "Spanish Ladies". The score illustrates and punctuates all of this dramatic outline.'

Following the original soundtrack recording, conducted by Williams himself in March 1975 (see 'Soundstage memories', p.53), additional



Shark ahoy!: the barrel chase sequence, John Williams's favourite cue



Respect for a master: Richard Kaufman felt honoured to play on the *Jaws* soundtrack; (below) a poster for *Goodbye, Mr Chips*, the music for which Williams oversaw

music was recorded in April for the commercial soundtrack release on LP by MCA in May of that year. Williams went on to win the Academy Award for Best Original Score at the 1976 Oscars, having previously won an Oscar in 1972 for *Fiddler on the Roof*, which he arranged, underscored and conducted. The win for *Jaws*, however, was the first for his original music, 'and that was a significant moment for me,' he's said.

Over the years, the soundtrack has continued to inspire fear and exhilaration in equal measure. In 2000, Decca/Universal released a new version to mark the film's 25th anniversary – the first time the entire 51 minutes of original score had seen the light of day. And in 2015, the soundtrack was reissued again through Intrada Records, this time including the full film score along with alternate takes, source music and a remaster of the 1975 album. Williams also arranged a suite based on the soundtrack to perform live in concert, including his favourite 'Out to Sea' segment followed by the 'Shark Cage Fugue'. The composer has conducted the piece many times for delighted audiences and recorded it with the Boston Pops in 1990.

As *Jaws* celebrates its 50th anniversary, returning to cinemas around the world, the power of its storytelling – bolstered by top direction, editing, acting and music – is every bit as potent today as during its first terrifying release in 1975. And like its sharp-toothed, 25-foot antagonist, an icon in the pantheon of screen villains, Williams's soundtrack is set to continue shocking and thrilling audiences for decades to come. Just when we all thought it was safe to go back in the water...

GETTY

Soundstage memories

Richard Kaufman remembers...

Richard Kaufman has devoted much of his life to conducting and supervising music for film and television, including 18 years at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios. He was principal pops conductor of Orange County's Pacific Symphony for 31 years and has guest conducted orchestras all over the world, including in the music of John Williams. Here he recalls playing on the 'Jaws' soundtrack as a violinist early in his career...

We felt we were taking part in something truly significant

'It was 1975, I had been out of college for a couple of years and had just started playing for the studios when I got the call to play for the *Jaws* sessions at Fox Studios. I was already a huge fan of John Williams's music for *The Reivers* and *Goodbye, Mr Chips*, so I was really happy to be playing with some of the best musicians in the business on his new soundtrack.

'As there was no opportunity to see the parts in advance, it was a bit frightening. *Jaws* is a very challenging score. There's lots of low, anticipatory music and then, suddenly, all hell breaks loose! In fact, I had never worn reading glasses before those sessions, but afterwards I experienced headaches and had to start wearing them! Having said that, the music is so technically perfect, written with an understanding of every instrument, that you can focus on the emotion.

The Most Beautiful Love Story
The most beautiful music
The most beautiful motion picture of the year
Peter O'Toole · Petula Clark
"Goodbye, Mr. Chips"

'During the sessions, there was a big screen showing the film that John was conducting to. And there was this young guy with a beard running around with an 8mm camera, who we learned was Steven Spielberg, the director! John is always so clear in his conducting. He commands respect, is very calm and straightforward. He knows exactly what to say without wasting any time. As a member of the orchestra, you want to help him bring his vision to life. And during those sessions, we felt we were taking part in something significant and that, particularly musically, this was going to last for a long time.

'I went on to play on many film scores by John Williams and by other composers, and I can honestly say that many conductors are either not communicative enough, or they can't stop talking! Sometimes they get frustrated or angry, but not John. He knows all the instruments so well, and he's equally strong as a composer and a conductor. I've never heard a bad word, not a bad syllable, said about him personally or musically. That's down to the way he treats people.'

All in the mind

The cliché of the 'mad genius' has long perpetuated the idea that creativity and mental illness are linked. But, asks Rebecca Franks, how true is that notion?

GETTY

'No great genius has ever existed without some touch of madness.' That was the view of Aristotle. It's a powerful idea that has travelled down the ages. Tales of creative artists who have experienced mental illness are hardwired into western culture. 'I put my heart and my soul into my work, and have lost my mind in the process,' proclaimed Vincent Van Gogh, a quote that has been turned into a thousand internet memes. Look online and you'll find quotes offering variations on the 'mad genius' theme aplenty, whether they're words from Virginia Woolf ('Madness is terrific, I can assure you ... in its lava, I still find most of the things I wrote about') or John Lennon ('I can't be mad because nobody's put me away; therefore I'm a genius.').

When it comes to classical music, the image of the suffering artist has stuck, too. In part, because it seems, on the surface at least, that there are dozens of historical composers who experienced a range of mental health issues. A brief, non-exhaustive sample gives us: alcoholism (Mussorgsky, Sibelius, Weelkes, Schubert), depression (Rossini, Monteverdi, Debussy), bipolar disorder (Robert Schumann), schizophrenia (Gurney), OCD (Bruckner), eating disorders (Handel), phobias (Schoenberg).

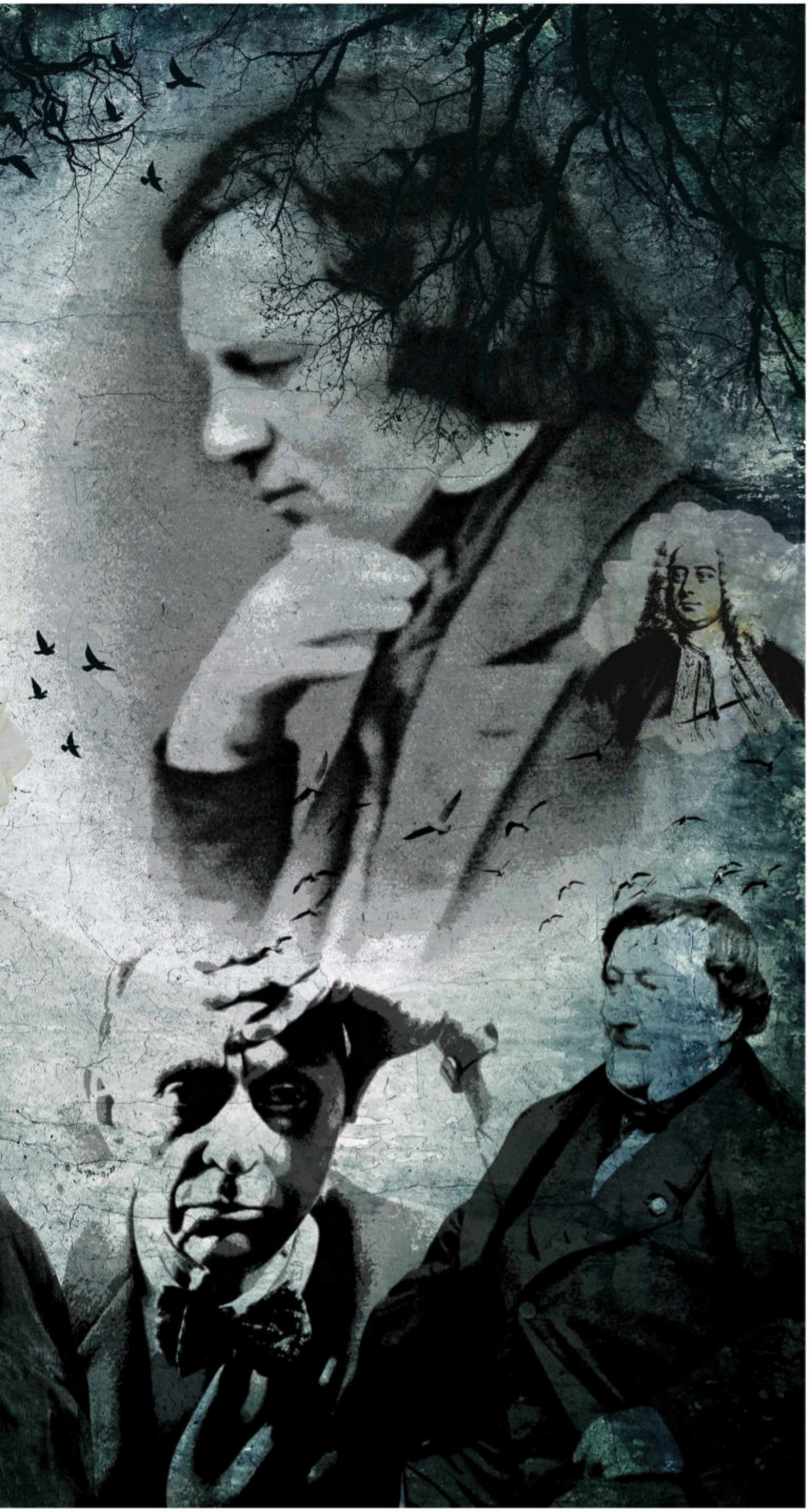
Personal biography is often mapped onto music. It's an easy hook for marketing departments, programme note writers and, dare I say it, journalists. We imagine the struggles and triumphs in Beethoven's symphonies as a mirror for his deafness. We write off (or at least, people have in the past) Schumann's late works as the inferior product of an unstable mind. Undeniably, people have found the 'mad genius' narrative alluring – and it even feels as if there's a certain logic to it. Creative thinking, after all, demands the mind to think freely and roam widely, to be unconventional and to see the familiar world afresh. But look beyond it, and what do we find? What really is the connection between creativity and mental illness?

Perhaps, you'd think, we could turn to the scientists for answers, but the results are not that simple. A few years ago, Claudia Hammond, presenter of BBC Radio 4's *All in the Mind*, summarised the situation in a BBC article:

> It romanticises mental illness to suggest that suffering is the true source of great art

'There's remarkably little good data on the topic.' A review of 29 studies into the links between creativity and mental health issues found that 15 of them showed there was no link, nine found a link, while five thought the relationship was unclear. In other words, the jury's out.

That said, brain imaging and genetic studies are opening new lines of inquiry. Plus, researchers are digging into the nuances of the subject, particularly when it comes to understanding the interactions between creativity and neurodivergence. One study in 2020 published in *Cognitive Processing*, for instance, found that people with autism had a strong and early preference for music, and that some autistic traits were well suited to



Method in the madness: (clockwise from main) composers Robert Schumann, Handel, Rossini, Schoenberg, Mussorgsky and Bruckner all experienced a wide range of serious mental health issues

musical creativity. ADHD psychiatrist Dr Ulrich Müller-Sedgwick recently discussed Mozart's neurodivergent traits in this magazine's pages and is also exploring how current understanding of neurodivergence could illuminate our knowledge of Mahler and Bruckner's creativity.

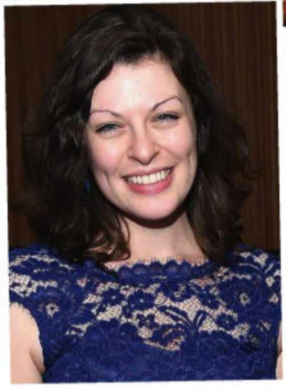
If there's no definitive scientific answer yet about a possible link between creativity and mental illness, examining the anecdotal basis of the 'tortured artist' trope itself immediately casts it in doubt. Suggesting that suffering is the true source of great art romanticises mental illness. Yet if we turn to the historical record, to the very same composers who are held up as examples of 'mad geniuses', we can immediately see that the opposite is also true. Schumann tried to drown himself in the Rhine, and although he was saved, he spent his last two years in an asylum, unable to compose another note. Sibelius's depression heralded his descent into musical silence in the last three decades of his life.

The idea is also, arguably, gendered. Male composers are allowed to be geniuses, and therefore tortured geniuses. Women are not. Historically, if women had mental health issues, they were more likely to have been written off as 'hysterical'. Sometimes it went even further. The psychiatrist husband (later ex-husband) of the 20th-century Australian composer Margaret Sutherland believed (erroneously, needless to say) that her love of composing was itself a symptom of mental illness.

In an age when discussions around mental health are opening up, and more support and successful treatments are available, it's clearer than ever that the myth of the tortured artist can be actively harmful. Take the American composer Julia Adolphe, whose music has been performed by the likes of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and LA Philharmonic. She has generalised anxiety disorder, and now finds medication and therapy help manage her symptoms. But at first, she was worried being treated would affect her creativity.

'One of the reasons I resisted in the beginning was because I'd have these frenzied nights of furious writing. Because I had procrastinated for so long, I had to just buckle down and write for nine hours,' she says. 'I didn't feel good doing it, but I would be very happy with what I had composed. Also, I was writing about my anxiety: my Viola Concerto is very much about that.' Adolphe falsely believed the anxiety was helping her to write – and that it was her main subject matter, she says. 'But at a certain point the anxiety was so high I wasn't getting into

Modern thinkers: Hattie Butterworth (left) and Rebecca Toal host a mental health podcast for musicians; (below) composer Julia Adolphe



the room to write.' Now, she has accepted her anxiety, and that 'it affects every aspect of my life'. It is, she says, 'manageable – and I can still thrive and have a career'.

It is a view echoed by Rebecca Toal, trumpeter and, alongside Hattie Butterworth, one half of the presenting duo behind the podcast *Things Musicians Don't Talk About*. 'People love to say you can use your mental illness for good and put it into your music,' says Toal. 'I don't think we listen to people in the moment they're suffering. We don't allow them to have space to suffer and be in the darkness. We want to put a positive spin on things, and that's a lot of what the "tortured artist" is: [the idea] there's a strength in having mental illness if you can make a product out of it. There was nothing about being mentally ill that improved me as a musician.'

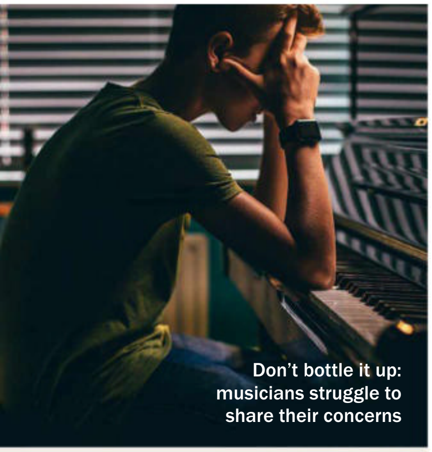
So, if we've busted the myth of the tortured artist, where does that leave the possible connection between creativity and mental health? 'The only connection I really see is this idea of extreme sensitivity. I am very sensitive in all aspects of my life. I understand that my sensitivity – to light, sound, colour, texture – makes me a powerful artist, and I see that as an asset,' says Adolphe. 'In my personal life it's a little more complicated. I'm easily triggered, and the anxiety swoops in. I can get overstimulated if it's too noisy. So it's not that my anxiety makes me a better artist, but rather my sensitivity.'

It's a topic that the *Things Musicians Don't Talk About* hosts have thought about a lot too. 'I think it's very hard to see which is the chicken and which is the egg,' says Butterworth. 'Do people come towards music because they're trying to find an outlet for their mental health problems, or are those problems caused by the industry?' Whichever comes first, the set-up for musical life can often cause stress that may exacerbate mental health issues. For composers, that might be the precarious and competitive state of freelance life, time spent alone or the challenges of juggling multiple jobs to make ends meet. The UK Musicians' Census by Help Music and the Musicians' Union in 2023 found that 30 per cent of professional musicians in the UK experienced poor mental wellbeing. Surveys like this cast light on the scale of the issue.

But even if mental illness is being destigmatised as a topic, Toal believes there's much more work to be done by the music industry to make it a healthier place: 'Mental health has become a buzz phrase that has almost become meaningless. No matter how much counselling provision you have, it doesn't change the landscape. It's a sticking plaster.' Misogyny and sexual assault are still rife in music, she points out. While our mental health is individual, we are shaped by the world around us.

The connection between creativity and mental health is a complex one. But when Adolphe set up her *LooseLeaf NoteBook* podcast to dig into it further, one unifying message did emerge. 'It was fascinating to hear how different everyone's experiences are. But it comes down to the same thing, which is that when we are engaged in a healthy creative process, we feel better.' A powerful truth, and one that deserves to be remembered down the ages.

Help Musicians offers resources to support mental health at helpmusicians.org.uk



Don't bottle it up: musicians struggle to share their concerns

Time to talk

A problem shared...

When music journalist and cellist Hattie Butterworth was looking for a podcast to help her with mental health issues, she could only find shows featuring pop stars and actors. Classical musicians in general, it seemed, just didn't want to talk about it. Why not?

'I think there is a huge fear that if we were to talk in this way about an art form that's a step removed from the worries of the modern world, which a lot of audiences view as an escape, it would take away from that escape,' says Butterworth, who went on to set up her own podcast, *Things Musicians Don't Talk About*, to explore the topic. 'I feel like agents and PR people may have a lot to do with it. I was looking at very famous people, but I knew nothing about their personal life.'

Feeling able to share publicly is, however, reliant on that being a safe thing to do. The industry is fast-paced and competitive, notes Rebecca Toal, fellow podcast co-host, and 'People are worried about it coming across as an excuse.' Plus, she adds, 'It's hard to be self-aware enough to say, no I'm not okay.'

Yet talking about mental health reaps rewards, says Butterworth. 'I strongly believe in the "beautiful mess" effect: when you share a vulnerability with an audience, they see you as more than a spectacle and they connect to you.'

GETTY, OLIVIA DA COSTA

WARNER CLASSICS ERATO

CELEBRATING ICONS OF THE WARNER CLASSICS & ERATO CATALOGUES

Fischer-Dieskau
Complete Lieder & Songs on Warner Classics

79-CD BOX SET WITH COMPLETE LIEDER & SONGS TO MARK THE CENTENARY

16TH MAY

OUT NOW

16 CD
ERATO
DÉSIRÉ-ÉMILE
INGHELBRECHT
THE COMPLETE ERATO RECORDINGS

WARNER CLASSICS
THE GREAT CELLO CONCERTOS
by
Jacqueline du Pré

16-CD BOX SET SHOWCASING COMPLETE DISCOGRAPHY FOR PATHÉ, DUCRETET-THOMSON, COLUMBIA AND ERATO

CONCERTOS BY **ELGAR**, **DELIUS**, **SCHUMANN**, **DVOŘÁK**, **HAYDN**, **BOCCHERINI**, **SAINT-SAËNS**, **LALO** AND **MONN**, IN HYBRID SACD FORMAT FOR THE FIRST TIME

warnerclassics.com amazon music Listen on Apple Music Spotify prestomusic hmv.com

Pieces of 8

There's more to vocal ensemble VOCES8 than its ethereal sound, not least a keen commitment to education, as Amanda Holloway reports

A cold winter light streams through the tall windows of St Anne and St Agnes Church, City of London, headquarters of the VOCES8 Foundation. The dark-panelled nave is veiled in mist, dry ice adding an air of mystery to the intimate Wren church. The eight singers of VOCES8, casual in jeans and jumpers, are filming a video for their next YouTube release, Ola Gjeilo's *Northern Lights*. Countertenor Barnaby Smith, co-founder of the ensemble, is tweaking camera angles and lights, positioning the singers and, once satisfied, takes his place beside fellow alto Katie Jeffries-Harris. The singers adopt a look of joyful serenity while mouthing softly to the pre-recorded audio track. After a few takes, their latest video is in the can.

VOCES8 was the biggest streamed classical vocal ensemble in the world in 2024, and is likely to surpass that figure in 2025. It is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year with a dizzying round of US and European concerts, education projects, a new album and a full day of events around the Barbican on 8 June (see box, p60). This video recording is an important occasion for American soprano Savannah Porter, who is appearing publicly for the first time with the ensemble. She doesn't officially start until September, but part of her induction is to be introduced gradually to the public. She has big shoes to fill – Andrea Haines, who has been with VOCES8 for 17 years, is leaving to explore new horizons.

The ensemble is known worldwide for its pure, ethereal sound and wide-ranging repertoire, captured on Decca and VOCES8 recordings, and music videos on the VOCES8 YouTube channel. Just eight voices blending seamlessly in *pianissimo* phrases – it takes extraordinary control and listening skills, and Haines is a master of this technique with the ensemble she

ANDY STAPLES, MDR/ANDREAS LANDER, HEAD SHOOTER, BBC

eventide
09:10

A 20-year bond: (opposite) VOCES8 are celebrating two decades together; (left) with the MDR-Kinderchor as part of MDR-Musiksommer in 2024; (below) on *BBC Breakfast* in 2014; Barnaby Smith, co-founder and artistic director

has sung in since she left university. 'She has given 17 years of her life to what has become an internationally renowned sound,' says Barnaby Smith. Millions of VOCES8 followers will be sad to see her go but, as he points out, 'If there's a silver lining, it does help the ensemble refocus on itself in a very organic and positive way. We've already begun with Savannah – for instance, in our sound check yesterday we spent an hour doing scales and making the chords ring.' Haines adds, 'It does take real muscular work to train the instrument to do all the things that we want to explore.' She says singers also have to be willing to give part of themselves away. 'There's an element of sacrifice, being in an ensemble. But it makes the whole even greater.'

From day one this small, ambitious ensemble focused not just on performance excellence but also on extending vocal education to everyone. All VOCES8 singers must be prepared to take part in the educational projects, the workshops and collaborations too. Paul Smith, co-founder with brother Barnaby of VOCES8, and CEO of the VOCES8 Foundation, says, 'Whether you're auditioning for our scholars' programme or to be a singer in one of the ensembles, it's very clear at interview stage that this is not just about being on the concert platform. As a musician in the 21st century, rather than going to university to study to be a soloist or to join a choir or an orchestra, we would encourage people to look at what they as an artist can do in their community too.'

> 'It takes real, muscular work to train our voices, and there's an element of sacrifice, being in an ensemble. But it makes the whole greater'

The organisation is now a multi-skilled Foundation run from VOCES8's music-centre-cum-recording-studio in London, with foundations also established in the US and France. During the pandemic, the team devised a digital festival, 'LIVE from London', which is now a bi-annual event, as is the international summer festival and school at Milton Abbey, Dorset. For a full list of the organisation's activities, which include a record company, a digital publishing house and three performing groups – VOCES8, APOLLO5 and all-women ensemble Lyyra – look on their website and be amazed. As Paul says, 'We don't know what the world will look like 20 years from now, but we believe we have a role as protectors of our artform for future generations. Hopefully our ideas can be seen as a model of best practice.'

Cheerful, positive, charismatic – you can't fail to be charmed by Barnaby and Paul. But you don't create an international music organisation just by being nice. There's a streak of steely determination at the core of the Smith brothers. Their parents, a nurse and a liberal prison governor, taught them the value of giving back to the community, And they've gathered around them like-minded colleagues to help them share the experience of vocal music with as many people as possible. Barnaby is artistic director for VOCES8, putting on around 130 concerts a year alongside its education work, and Paul, an inspirational education leader, is always looking for places the charity can have an impact.

UK Foundation projects include whole-class singing initiatives in primary schools, helping primary and secondary schools establish and develop school choirs, workshops and performances at the VOCES8 Centre, teacher training and a unique Young Leader Programme. 'We're going into areas that don't have good music provision, offering long-term support, coaching and online resources,' says Paul. 'I wanted to get over barriers to entry, giving teachers who aren't comfortable singing a book of tips that get them started and allow them to build something better.' Every year the Foundation gives scholarships to eight VOCES8 Scholars in the UK and 12 in the US. They receive tutoring from current and former members of VOCES8, training in performing, recording and workshop leading, and opportunities to sing alongside VOCES8. Paul says, 'The lovely

A year of festivities: VOCES8 turns 20

The big 2-0

Birthday celebrations

In the 20 years since they started, Grammy-nominated vocal ensemble VOCES8 and their music charity the VOCES8 Foundation have brought music into the lives of people worldwide.

On 8 June there's a day of music-making in the Barbican, London, culminating in a sold-out **concert by VOCES8**. They'll be joined by the VOCES8 Scholars, former ensemble members, the BBC Singers and violinist Jack Liebeck. The programme includes works by former and current composers-in-residence Ola Gjeilo, Jonathan Dove, Roxanna Panufnik and Ken Burton. The concert also celebrates the release of VOCES8's **new album on Decca, TWENTY**, featuring two decades of audience favourites from sacred to jazz, and new commissions.

Find out how VOCES8 brings voices together in communities and schools by joining a **VOCES8 Big Sing** from 5-6pm in the Foyer led by Paul Smith. With music inspired by everything from the English Renaissance to Bobby McFerrin, this event is open to all ages and abilities.

VOCES8's **sister ensemble APOLLO5** also celebrates its 15th anniversary at 1.30pm in St Giles' Cripplegate. *For further dates visit: voces8.com/concerts.*

ANDY STAPLES, GETTY

An inspiring mission: Paul Smith conducts a choir of 400 for VOCES8's SING'IN programme; (below) Paul Simon has worked with the ensemble

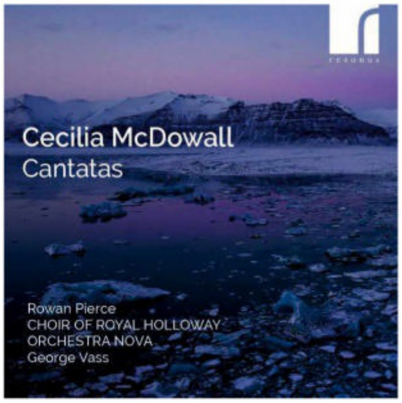
thing is that each year we're putting out 20 more professionals and they populate other choirs. Then our message percolates around.'

Barnaby and Paul were choristers at Westminster Abbey and later the Royal School of Church Music, where their social life revolved around singing with friends. After the RSCM they pulled together a choir to enter an international choral Grand Prix in Italy, and won. 'People suddenly started offering us opportunities to sing paid concerts, so that gave us something to light the whole thing,' says Barnaby. Aware that the excellent music education they received was no longer available to most people, they wanted to develop an education programme. There was a business logic to this, alongside the altruism, as Barnaby points out. 'When you're trying to create a new artistic venture, it does help to have an educational side to attract funding and impetus.' Paul left his job at the Irish Chamber Orchestra and, with a business plan scribbled on a napkin on the ferry home, the two brothers developed VOCES8 from their parents' attic. 'I would give anything still to have that napkin,' says Barnaby.

By 2008, when VOCES8 was established as a successful *a cappella* ensemble, Barnaby was studying for a masters as a countertenor in Switzerland. He decided to concentrate on VOCES8 instead. 'I realised that I didn't get as much satisfaction out of being a soloist as I did from my ensemble singing,' he says. During the pandemic Barnaby had a chance to rekindle his solo career, recording albums of Handel and Bach, to be followed by a Pergolesi album. He is also expanding his conducting career. Paul, meanwhile, is performing and composing – VOCES8 has recorded an album of his music which is coming out in July. In addition, his Mars Smith Duo, with fiancée Daniela Mars on low woodwind, is making beautiful music videos inspired by remote landscapes.

VOCES8 may be associated with transcendent works by such contemporary composers as Ola Gjeilo, Morten Lauridsen and Eric Whitacre, but they are just as likely to let their hair down with performances of jazz standards, pop and folk. In 2022, they were offered a chance to work with singer-songwriter Paul Simon. He had heard a VOCES8 track on a streaming service and was captured by their sound. He called Barnaby out of the blue to ask if they'd sing on his new album, *Seven Psalms*. The ensemble gathered in Texas and recorded harmonies for Simon's songs, plus a library of individual notes. Paul Simon has used the singers' contributions in an extraordinary way, explains Paul Smith: 'Listening to what you think is a guitar, Paul will have put a singer's note around it like a halo.'

With such wide-ranging activities, which VOCES8 initiatives are having the most impact? 'The release of our videos has been the biggest single reason for the growth of the brand,' says Paul. 'We can count the number of kids who physically come to a workshop, but the videos are reaching millions. It's like throwing darts at a large dartboard; you don't know where they're going to land. You put the video out there and trust that if people can connect with it, it's going to help them learn.' That's the essence of the VOCES8 vision – music, performance and education working in perfect harmony.

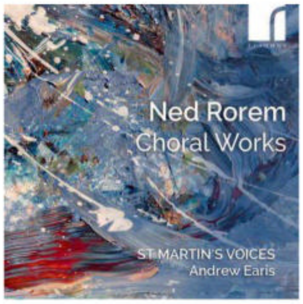

Cecilia McDowall
Cantatas
Rowan Pierce
CHOIR OF ROYAL HOLLOWAY
ORCHESTRA NOVA
George Vass

This album presents a stunning collection of recent cantatas by acclaimed composer Cecilia McDowall, performed by the Choir of Royal Holloway, Orchestra Nova, and conductor George Vass. Known for her 'spicy rhythms and colours' (*Gramophone*), McDowall's music weaves vibrant textures and emotional depth, drawing listeners into a compelling journey.

McDowall's distinct choral voice shines through, blending introspective reflection with exuberant energy, making this an essential addition to the choral repertoire.

JOHANN LUDWIG KREBS
KEYBOARD WORKS
VOLUME 5
STEVEN DEVINE
HARPSICHORD

Johann Ludwig Krebs: Keyboard Works Vol. 5
Steven Devine (harpsichord)


Ned Rorem
Choral Works
ST MARTIN'S VOICES
Andrew Earis

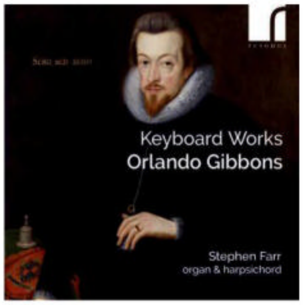
Ned Rorem: Choral Works
St Martin's Voices, Piatti Quartet,
Andrew Earis (director)

resonus classics
www.resonusclassics.com

INVENTA

JACQUET OF MANTUA
Motets & Secular Songs
THE CHOIR OF SIDNEY SUSSEX COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
Kirsty Whatley harp David Skinner director

Jacquet of Mantua: Motets & Secular Songs
The Choir of Sidney Sussex College,
Cambridge, David Skinner (director)

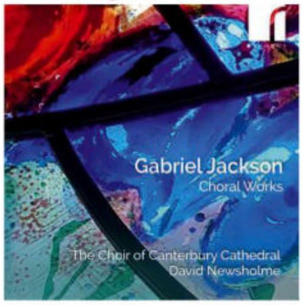

Keyboard Works
Orlando Gibbons
Stephen Farr
organ & harpsichord

Orlando Gibbons: Keyboard Works
Stephen Farr (organ & harpsichord)

Errollyn Wallen
Orchestral Works
BBC CONCERT ORCHESTRA
John Andrews

Errollyn Wallen: Orchestral Works
BBC Concert Orchestra, John Andrews (conductor)

Coming Soon


Gabriel Jackson
Choral Works
The Choir of Canterbury Cathedral
David Newsholme

Gabriel Jackson: Choral Works
The Choir of Canterbury Cathedral,
David Newsholme (director)

prestomusic Follow us on: X @resonusclassics f /resonusclassics

---

Introducing... Igor Balakirev

Russia's most exciting new classical romance composer
Great-grand nephew of Mily Balakirev

Welcoming Spring! We are pleased to share the song "May" with you

Composed by Igor Balakirev. From the album "The Seasons"
Exclusively on You Tube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6dl1_BcKm8
Website: www.igorbalakirev.com

Savonlinna Finland

Forests, lakes, a 550-year-old fairytale castle and a famous opera festival… ***Charlotte Smith*** is entranced by this charming Nordic town

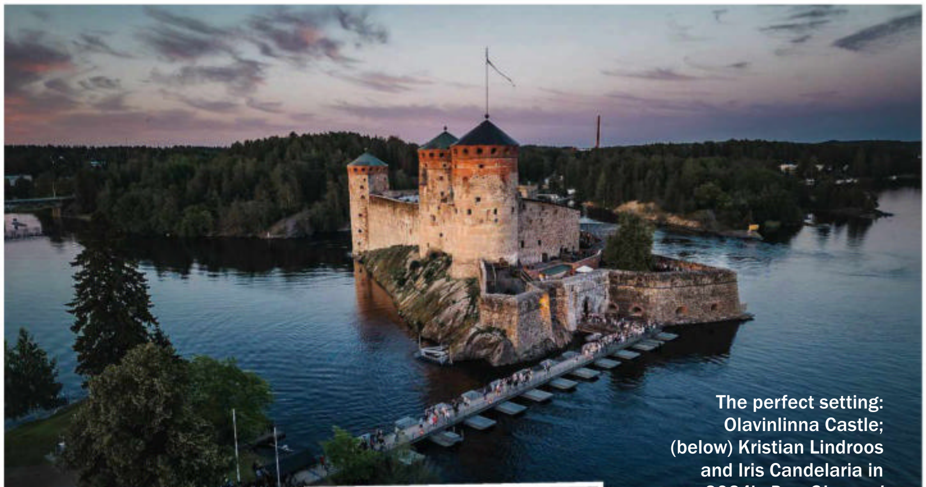
A mix of old and new: Verdi's *Nabucco* at Savonlinna Opera Festival, 2024; (below) Karita Mattila as Ortrud in Wagner's *Lohengrin*

The journey to Savonlinna is not for the faint-hearted. After a perfectly ordinary flight to Helsinki, I find myself on a minute, Aeroexpress Regional Embraer – complete with forward-facing propellors. Suffice to say the 45-minute trip is hair-raisingly exhilarating, and though I feel every bump and lurch in the pit of my stomach, the view of Finland's lakes and forests is extraordinary.

It's appropriate that such a remarkable journey should end in a remarkable location, and the lakeside town of Savonlinna is certainly that. Quiet, charming and built on several islands, with a cobbled town centre, it's home not only to Lake Saimaa's rare freshwater seal but also to Olavinlinna, the world's northernmost still-standing medieval castle, which dates right back to 1475.

Set on its own rocky islet at the meeting point between two waterways, the castle is only accessible by footbridge or boat. Illuminated by the setting sun at twilight and well-placed uplighting after dark, it's a picture-perfect fairytale castle made even

JUSSI SILVENNOINEN, GETTY



The perfect setting: Olavinlinna Castle; (below) Kristian Lindroos and Iris Candelaria in 2024's *Don Giovanni*

more special as a venue for the month-long Savonlinna Opera Festival, which each year attracts 70,000 visitors from around the world.

The story goes that, in 1907, Finnish soprano Aino Ackté visited Olavinlinna Castle for a political meeting, as Finland strove to exert its independence from Russia. She immediately recognised the castle's potential as the romantic setting for theatrical productions, and the first Savonlinna Opera Festival was duly held in the summer of 1912 – a leading light for Finnish culture and a chance to articulate the country's new patriotic values. Over the next five years, five Finnish operas were performed at the castle, but plans were curtailed by the First World War, the Russian Revolution and the Finnish Civil War. After nearly four decades, the wheels were set in motion for a triumphant relaunch, and in 1967, the festival returned with a production of Beethoven's *Fidelio*.

Since then, the event has grown to become a month-long extravaganza, with operas held in the castle courtyard, under a tent-like canopy – built, like all the festival's temporary stages and props, to ensure that no lasting damage comes to the original structure. Taking a backstage tour, I am shown the lengths to which singers and technicians alike must grapple with a medieval building designed for strategic defence rather than artistic endeavour – one method of entering the stage requires the singer to climb a narrow, rickety-looking set of temporary metal stairs to reach a miniature window at a frightening height, at which point he has to shimmy through on his belly and clamber inside.

But such heroic efforts are certainly worthwhile – there's nothing like attending an opera in such a historically evocative setting. I am lucky enough to see three productions during my brief stay. First up is Verdi's *Nabucco* in an original staging by Rodula Gaitanou, which recasts an Old Testament struggle between the Hebrews and Babylonians as technocrats versus eco warriors in a battle to save the planet from climate change. If the modern agenda is at times a little awkwardly draped over the work's ancient setting, the production more than makes up for it with magnificent sets, vibrantly coloured costumes, and wonderful singing and playing by the impressive 86-person Festival Choir (a mix of professionals and students) and Festival Orchestra (featuring musicians from ten Finnish ensembles).

Singers and crew grapple heroically with a difficult medieval building

On my second evening I see a more traditional production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, with stunning singing from its female soloists – Marjukka Tepponen as Donna Anna and Iris Candelaria as Zerlina. The Commendatore's entrance – before he drags away the Don to hell – is a fantastic piece of theatre, complete with smoke and lights, and making use of a huge, original wooden door.

Finally, there is a trip to the bonkers, mythical world of Wagner's *Lohengrin*, with a star turn from Finland's own Karita Mattila as the scheming Ortrud – another triumph of singing and spectacle.

That all three stagings are completely sold out speaks for itself. The town of Savonlinna is now synonymous with the opera festival that shares its name – proof of Aino Ackté's remarkable foresight more than 100 years ago. With this winning formula, the festival will surely be going strong 100 years from now.

Savonlinna Opera Festival 2025 runs from 3 July to 2 Aug and celebrates 550 years of Olavinlinna Castle with highlights from past years. **Full info: operafestival.fi/en/**

Long-distance call: Ville Piippo throws in 2004

In full swing

Mobile thrown

There's more to Savonlinna than breathtaking scenery. In fact, this quiet Finnish town is also an unlikely home to the Mobile Phone Throwing World Championships – an annual event launched in 2000 by translation company Fennolingua in partnership with local recycling centres. Participants are judged on distance and technique in categories including 'Traditional' over the shoulder throwing and 'Freestyle', which prizes creative 'choreography'. Since the competition's launch, National Championships have sprung up in countries including Germany, the UK and the US, with prize winners earning the honour of competing in the World Championships. And the Grand Prize? A new mobile phone, of course!

Composer of the Week is broadcast on Radio 3 at 4pm, Monday to Friday. Programmes in June 2025 are:
2-6 June Bizet
9-13 June Fanny Hensel
16-20 June Palestrina
23-27 June Gavin Bryars
30 June – 4 July Satie

Orlando Gibbons

From court refinement to London street cries, Gibbons's music captures the very essence of early-Stuart England, writes *Simon Heighes*

ILLUSTRATION: MATT HERRING

With one foot in the Renaissance and one in the Baroque, Orlando Gibbons united two golden ages of English music. While building on the polyphonic riches of William Byrd and Thomas Tallis, he also helped lay the foundations for the expressive new style of the 17th century, preparing the ground for his most distinguished successor: Henry Purcell.

Gibbons was a musical thoroughbred. Born into a musical family in Oxford in 1583, he was introduced to the cut-and-thrust of local music-making by his father who ran the City Waits in both Oxford and Cambridge. His elder brother, Edward, who sang at King's College, Cambridge, then smoothed a path for the young Orlando to join the choir in 1596. The Gibbons brothers prospered: Edward was master of the choristers, and in 1598 Orlando was old enough to enter the University. When Edward left the choir late in 1598, we lose sight of Orlando too. But whatever he did, he certainly broadened his musical education and must have networked hard, for in 1603, at the age of just 19, he re-emerged fully formed – with an impressive court job under his belt. Well, almost.

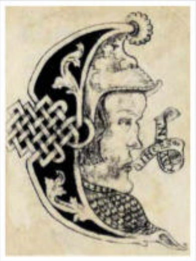
Gibbons's Chapel Royal position might have gone up in smoke had Guy Fawkes succeeded

Perhaps because he was so young for a prestigious post with the Chapel Royal, he initially had to serve an unpaid, probationary term. It wasn't until 1605 that he was finally sworn in as a 'Gentleman' of the Chapel Royal – a position which might have gone up in smoke after just a few months had Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators succeeded in their explosive ambitions. But he and King James I survived unscathed, and the only fireworks which penetrated the royal walls were musical ones – with young Orlando seated at the organ. Or at least we think so. Record keeping was a bit hit-and-miss, and the first confirmation we actually get of Orlando's new job description – as a 'royal organist' – surfaces in the credentials he supplied for his Cambridge degree in 1606.

It was an eventful year for Gibbons: marrying the daughter of a Chapel Royal official, setting up home in the parish of St Margaret's, Westminster, and beginning to cultivate his connections in court and church circles. His earliest datable music often carries dedications to the up-and-coming and influential – from minor court officials to senior clergy and nobility. The anthem *Blessed are all they*, written in 1613 for the marriage of King James's favourite, the Earl of Somerset, must have added much needed gravitas to the proceedings. The not-so-spotless bride was already known for her roving eye, but her murderous tendencies were little suspected until a Lucrezia Borgia-like poisoning led to death penalties for both newly-weds. Gibbons was on safer ground with Lord Salisbury, who helped resolve a financial matter in his favour and received a Pavan and Galliard in return.

Patronage oiled the cogs of all the arts, and Gibbons's man was Sir Christopher Hatton II, in whose house he said he

Gibbons's style



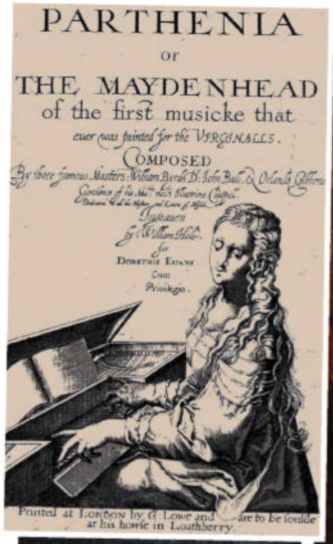
GETTY

Word setting Gibbons was less interested in 'word-painting' – with music literally illustrating the words – than he was in the power of rhetoric. His expressive declamation of the text, with powerful melodic and rhythmic phrases, is what characterises his most progressive music, such as the verse anthems *This is the Record of John* and *Glorious and powerful God.*

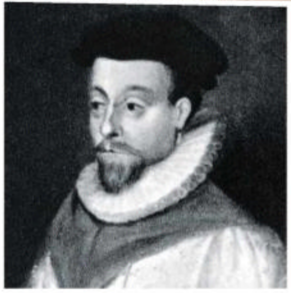
Colour For broad appeal and practicality, he kept his scoring flexible. He advertised his *Madrigals* as 'apt for viols and voices', while his anthems were accompanied by organ, wind or string instruments depending on resources, occasion and venue. He made pioneering use of the violin, though never specified it by name.

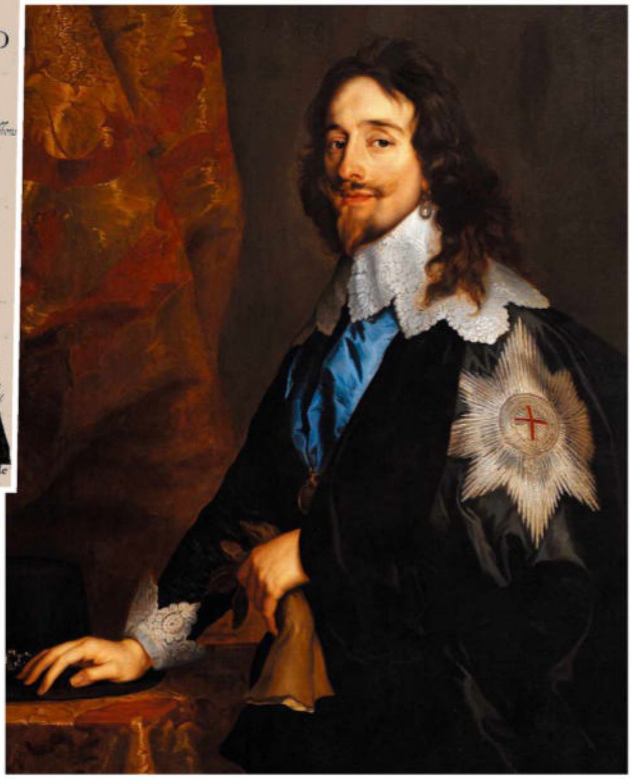
Polyphony The kind of 'many-voiced' textures Gibbons used in both vocal and instrumental music relied on parts of equal importance, often closely imitating one another. He particularly enjoyed the dramatic impact of suddenly switching to simple chordal writing – to declaim the text or emphasise a good tune.

In Nomine In five works Gibbons tapped into a uniquely English tradition of viol consort music dating back to the 1550s. Around a fragment of plainsong from the 'In nomine' of the Mass *Gloria tibi Trinitas* (c.1520) by Taverner (above), Gibbons crafted complex webs of polyphony – vehicles for his most serious thoughts.



PARTHENIA
or
THE MAYDENHEAD
of the first musicke that
euer was printed for the VIRGINALLS.
COMPOSED
By three famous Masters: William Byrd, D: John Bull, & Orlando Gibbons
Ingrauen
by William Hole.
for
DOROTHIE EVANS
Cum
Priuilegio.
Printed at LONDON by G. Lowe and are to be ſoulde
at his howſe in Loathberry.





Lofty company: (clockwise from right) the 1613 *Parthenia* collection featured works by Gibbons, Byrd and Bull; the future Charles I encouraged innovation from his musicians; Gibbons himself; (opposite) his memorial at Canterbury Cathedral

wrote most of his *Madrigals* of 1612. There he had access to one of the finest private music libraries in the country, and literary volumes to match. Gibbons's poetic tastes seem fairly serious. John Donne gets intense about love in Gibbons's setting of *Ah, dear heart*, while Sir Walter Raleigh's sarcastic riposte to death in *What is our Life?* offers textbook Jacobean melancholy.

The famous *Silver Swan* was always the star of the collection, with its tenderly naïve depiction of the ultimate swansong: in life she 'had no note' but 'as death approached unlocked her silent throat'. Gibbons tugs at the heartstrings, refining the music down to hymn-like simplicity, which comes into its own when performed, as originally intended, as a consort song for soprano, buoyed up by viols.

Gibbons had what today we'd call a portfolio career. But he wasn't just a happy-go-lucky freelancer – his outstanding keyboard skills earned him regular employment at court. Since his late teens he'd served the Chapel Royal at the organ, and in 1617 helped form the musical retinue of the new Prince of Wales, Charles – later Charles I. He clearly excelled, because three years later King James snapped him up as a virginalist for his own private chambers. By 1623, Gibbons was the natural choice for the prestigious post of Organist of Westminster Abbey because he was – according to one chronicler – quite simply 'the best finger of that age'.

His exceptional talents had been spotted a decade earlier by the venerable Byrd, who invited him to contribute six pieces to the first ever publication of keyboard music in England – *Parthenia* – printed to celebrate the marriage of the king's daughter, Princess Elizabeth, in 1613. Lord Salisbury must have been delighted to see his Pavan and Galliard immortalised in print, flattering him with melodic charm and a noble gait.

Alongside his sparkling side, Gibbons also explored the more serious thoughts often reserved for rich consort music and anthems, leaving a legacy of around 45 keyboard pieces, colourfully varied in style and irresistibly finger-pleasing. Centuries later, it was these qualities – especially the Bach-like richness of Gibbons's textures – which attracted the admiration of the legendary pianist Glenn Gould, whose affectionate recordings of the late 1960s helped revive Gibbons's fortunes.

In church, though, Gibbons's music never entirely disappeared. A few of his anthems, services and hymns survived the Civil War and have rung out in cathedrals ever since: the glorious final 'Amen' of *Great King of Gods* graced the Coronation of Charles III in 2023. More uplifting and energetic, *O clap your hands* is a thrilling masterclass in full eight-voice polyphony written for the founding of the Oxford Professorship of Music in 1622 (probably when Gibbons was painted wearing doctoral robes).

> Gibbons's uplifting *O clap your hands* is a masterclass in full eight-voice polyphony

The most recent and exciting Gibbons research has focussed on his ten 'consort' anthems, like the cheerful *O all true faithful hearts* marking 'the kings happy recoverie from a great dangerous sicknes' in 1619. William Hunt (from the viol consort Fretwork) has led efforts to reconstruct what may have been heard when these uniquely poetic works were performed behind the closed doors of private chapels and the Chapel Royal. Replacing the familiar organ parts with accompaniments for viols or wind, swapping countertenors for high tenors, and using a more likely, higher pitch, Gibbons's music suddenly snaps into focus – revealing the drama of the solo parts and its cutting-edge sonorities.

Experimentation was at the heart of Gibbons's own work with a progressive group of musicians who surrounded the young Prince Charles. Unlike the King's musical establishment, which was strictly segregated into families of instruments (recorders, viols, violins), the Prince mixed everyone together, allowing his composers to try out new colours and styles. The most important innovation was kidnapping the violin from the safety of its family and letting it loose with viols and a keyboard.

Gibbons obviously had fun in his fantasias for the 'Great Double Bass', where high above a large, sonorous bass viol he envisaged a brilliant violin. So closely was the violin associated with the dance at this time that Gibbons keeps breaking out into quirky, square-toed steps and snatches of folk song. There's more dancing in some of his popular *Fantasies of Three Parts* (c.1620), this time with two violin-like parts. These nine three-part fantasias

GETTY

have so many recurring turns of phrase, and such a sense of shared familiarity, that Gibbons may have conceived them as a set of variations on a secret theme – just possibly a 17th-century *Enigma Variations*.

Early Baroque composers didn't really reveal themselves in their music. But from time to time we do catch glimpses of the fun-loving Gibbons vying with his alter ego, the studious royal musician. The *Cries of London* is his most theatrical and instantly appealing work. Imagine sitting in a well-upholstered room off a London thoroughfare where a consort of viols is playing, and through the window we hear the cries of the street sellers below. Just like 'Any old iron?' of later centuries, Gibbons transcribes over 80 cries to create a bustling panorama of street-life from dawn till dusk. Everything's up for grabs, from 'hot mutton pies' and 'perfumed waistcoats' to cures for 'corns on your feet and toes' and the chimney sweep's promise that 'no soot shall fall into your porridge pot'. Gibbons wittily accompanies his raucous singers with the most refined viol music available – an *In Nomine* – the ultimate intellectual challenge for generations of English composers.

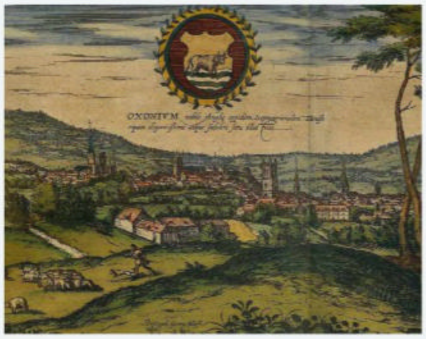
Gibbons began his royal duties in the first weeks of James I's reign and died unexpectedly – at the age of just 41 – in June 1625, just as Charles I took over the reins. On the 400th anniversary of his death, it's remarkable just how much of his music is now regularly performed by organists, harpsichordists, viol consorts, singers, choirs ... and pianists. For Glenn Gould the attraction was emotional: 'Given a hard day, a late night [and a little too much Wagner] ... the throat is seized by a catch that no other music, this side of Orlando Gibbons's anthems, can elicit with equivalent intensity'.

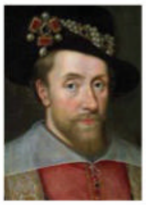
GIBBONS Life & Times

1583

LIFE: Orlando Gibbons is baptised on 25 December in ***Oxford***, where his father, William, is a councillor and town wait. His three brothers are all musically talented.

TIMES: The earliest known life insurance policy is made at London's Royal Exchange, with 30 beneficiaries set to be paid a combined total of £383 if William Gibbons (no relation) dies within a year.



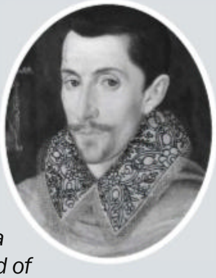


1603

LIFE: Following the recent accession to the throne of ***James I***, he serves as a musician in the Chapel Royal, formally being sworn in as a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal two years later.

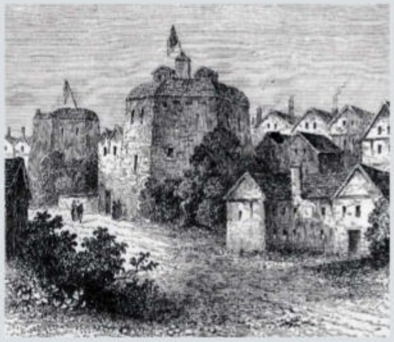
TIMES: Elizabeth I dies aged 69 at Richmond Palace, bringing to an end an incident-filled but successful reign of more than 44 years. She leaves no heir and names no successor.

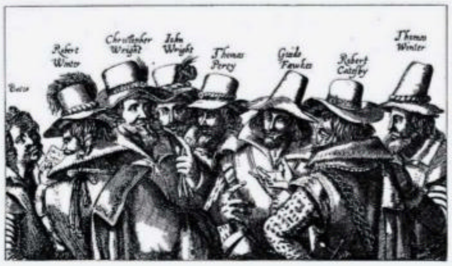
1613



LIFE: Alongside fellow composers William Byrd and ***John Bull***, he contributes to the 21-piece *Parthenia or the Maydenhead of the first musicke that ever was printed for the Virginalls*.

TIMES: During a performance of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, a misfiring theatrical canon sets the ***Globe Theatre*** in London alight. The venue burns down, but no-one is badly hurt.





1606

LIFE: In the same year as taking the degree of MusB at Cambridge University, he marries Elizabeth Patten and takes up residence in Westminster. The couple go on to have seven children.

TIMES: ***Guy Fawkes*** and several other conspirators are tried for their part in the Gunpowder Plot the previous November. Found guilty, they are subsequently hung, drawn and quartered.

1619

LIFE: Already a member of an ensemble in the royal household, he is now appointed to attend the privy chamber as a virginalist, paid £46 per annum.

TIMES: Philosopher René Descartes has three dreams that inspire his formulation of Cartesian geometry and, eventually, the theory 'I think, therefore I am'.

1625

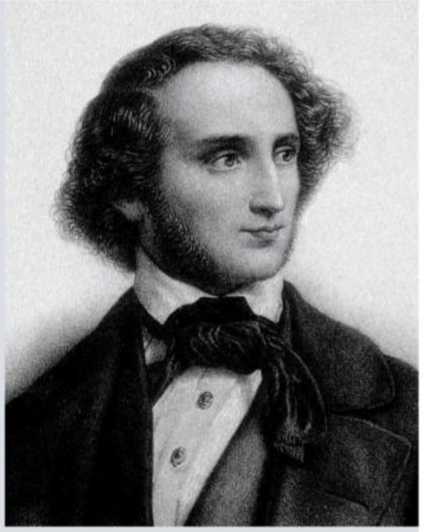
LIFE: While on a royal court visit to Canterbury, he is suddenly taken ill and dies, probably of a brain haemorrhage, on 5 June, aged just 41 and leaving no will.

TIMES: Britain's Charles I marries French princess Henrietta Maria by proxy in Paris. He is represented, both at the ceremony and later in bed, by the Duc de Chevreuse.

Felix Mendelssohn

Symphony No. 4 'Italian'

Erik Levi basks in the Mediterranean sunshine and sips a limoncello as he enjoys the genial company of this most radiant of orchestral works



The composer

In April 1829, the 20-year-old Felix Mendelssohn arrived in London, a little wobbly on his feet after a rough sea crossing. And so began not only his first tour of Britain – including the visit that led to his 'Scottish' Third Symphony and *Hebrides Overture* – but also an insatiable wanderlust. By this stage, the German had already created his own waves at home, with works such as his Octet and *A Midsummer Night's Dream Overture* and, as a conductor, by leading the revival of JS Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. Enjoying his metaphorical place in the sun, in 1830 he prepared for a literal one, as Italy awaited.

Building a Library is broadcast on Radio 3 at 3.30pm each Saturday as part of *Record Review*. A highlights podcast is available on BBC Sounds.

The work

'Italy at last! And what I have all my life considered as the greatest possible felicity is now begun, and I am basking in it. Every hour spent here has brought with it so much never to be forgotten, that I do not know where to find sufficient grasp of intellect to comprehend it all properly.'

Writing to his parents in November 1830, Felix Mendelssohn could hardly curb his excitement at having arrived in Venice on the first stage of a ten-month tour of Italy. Following in the footsteps of the poet Goethe, who some years earlier had undertaken a similar journey, the composer waxed lyrical about many things the country had to offer. He was awestruck by the imposing ancient buildings of Italy's great cities and mesmerised by seeing some of the masterpieces of Italian Renaissance art in the flesh. No less inspiring were the beauties of the countryside and the warm and sunny climate.

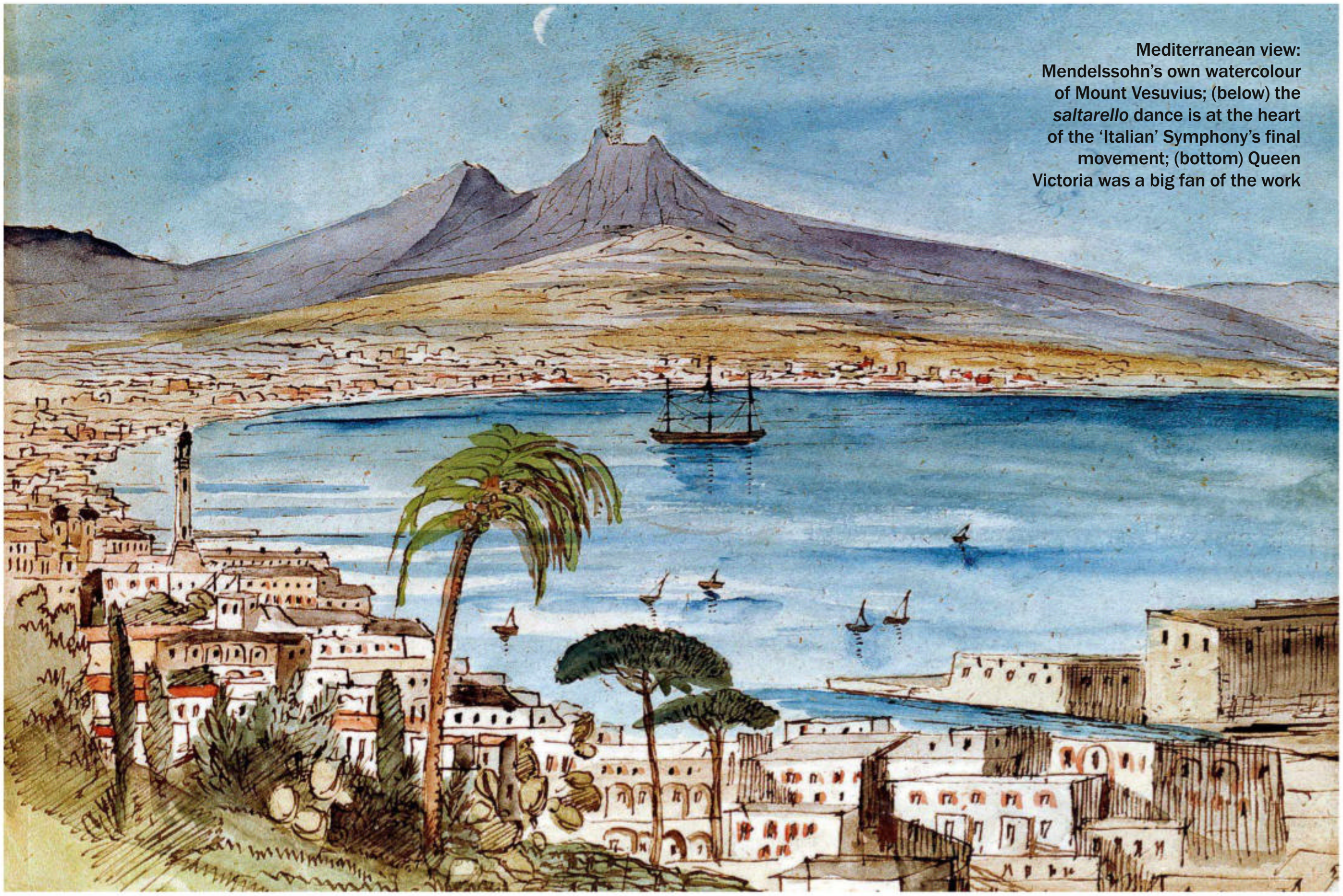
Overriding his sheer delight at soaking up Italy's unique atmosphere, however, was a concern to maintain and expand his horizons as a composer. Several new works were planned during this period, including a Symphony in A major, to which he attached the nickname 'Italian'. The first direct reference to this composition appears in a letter from February 1831 while he was staying in Rome. Claiming that he had already made rapid progress on the symphony, Mendelssohn confidently predicted that it 'will become the happiest piece I have written – indeed, the ultimate in cheerfulness.'

There are further oblique mentions of the 'Italian' Symphony during his visit to Naples later in 1831, but it was only on his return to Berlin the following year that Mendelssohn received the strongest impetus to actually complete the work. Gratefully accepting a commission from the Philharmonic Society in London to provide them with a new symphony, an overture and a vocal piece, he buckled down and drafted a first version between January and March 1833. On his arrival in London the following month, he handed over the manuscript of the completed symphony to the Society.

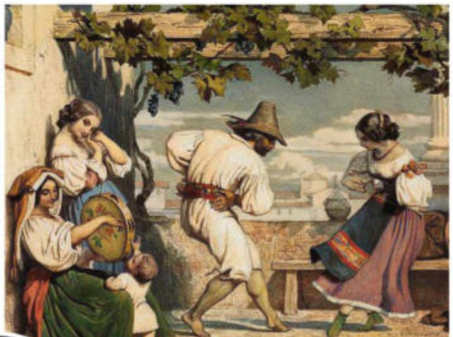
By all accounts, the first performance, which took place in May 1833 at the Hanover Square Rooms in London, was a huge success. A review, published in a London newspaper, conceded that the technical execution of such a challenging new work was by no means pristine, but nonetheless asserted, on the strength of only one hearing, that the symphony 'would endure for ages'.

Special praise was reserved for the slow second movement, purportedly inspired by the composer witnessing a religious procession in Naples. The music provoked such enthusiasm from the audience that the movement was immediately encored. But the rest of the work also generated extremely positive comments.

Mendelssohn was inspired by the beauties of the Italian countryside and the warm climate



Mediterranean view: Mendelssohn's own watercolour of Mount Vesuvius; (below) the *saltarello* dance is at the heart of the 'Italian' Symphony's final movement; (bottom) Queen Victoria was a big fan of the work



GETTY

According to a review in *The Harmonicon*, the cheery opening *Allegro vivace* and the wildly exuberant finale, whose insistent rhythmic drive is based on the propulsive dance rhythms of the Neapolitan *saltarello*, 'speak at once to the highly excited state of the composer's imagination and the fine flow of his animal spirits', whereas the gently pastoral third movement Minuet and Trio demonstrates 'genius of a high order in every bar'.

Initially elated by the London response, Mendelssohn returned home to Germany, fully intending to publish the work as soon as possible. But the neurotically self-critical composer soon harboured severe doubts about what he had written, and in particular expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the first movement. Accordingly, in 1834, he began a thorough revision, initially tinkering with various aspects of the second, third and fourth movements. Yet in making these amendments, he sacrificed some of the freshness and spontaneity of the original. Furthermore, for reasons which are not entirely clear, he subsequently shelved the idea of rewriting the opening *Allegro vivace*, and from that moment onwards made no further mention of the symphony.

Meanwhile, the manuscript and orchestral parts of the original version of the work remained in London. By popular demand, the 'Italian' Symphony was featured at the Philharmonic Society's concerts on three further occasions: in June 1834, May 1837 and June 1838. Each time it was heard, the general consensus remained as fervently supportive as was the case at the premiere. But paying due respect to Mendelssohn's wishes, there were no further performances of it, either in London or elsewhere during the composer's lifetime.

Astonishing though it may seem, Mendelssohn himself came to regard the 'Italian' Symphony as a flawed, unfinished work that was unworthy of publication. Posterity, however, views the symphony rather differently. Following its resuscitation at the express wish of Queen Victoria in London in March 1848 – four months after the composer's death at just 38 years old – and the first German performance in Leipzig in 1849, this brilliant and exuberant masterpiece has never looked back, immediately securing a place in the repertoire and becoming a favourite in concert halls worldwide.

Turn the page to discover our recommended recordings of Mendelssohn's 'Italian' Symphony

Italian stallion: Paavo Järvi takes us on a thrilling Mendelssohn ride

The best recording

Clear and precise, yet full of fizz

MENDELSSOHN SYMPHONIES
TONHALLE-ORCHESTER ZÜRICH
PAAVO JÄRVI
α

Paavo Järvi *(conductor)*
Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich
Alpha 1004

With literally hundreds of recordings of the 'Italian' Symphony available, it might seem an impossible task to select a credible shortlist of the finest. However, applying a set of strict criteria as to which versions should make the cut enables this undertaking to be somewhat less daunting.

The first yardstick is the quality of sound. While there are some worthwhile recordings from the 1940s and '50s, murky technology rules these out of court – put simply, you have to have sophisticated sonics for Mendelssohn's sparkling orchestration to really come alive.

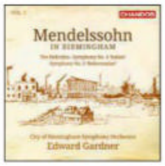
Another issue is the size of orchestra. Although Mendelssohn is generally regarded as an early-Romantic composer, the orchestra he employs in the 'Italian' Symphony is effectively no larger in scale than those used for the late symphonies of Haydn and Mozart. Conductors who feature a full-bodied complement of strings run the risk of creating an overblown orchestral texture, which makes it difficult for the wind and brass parts to be heard. Of course, an awareness of the instruments Mendelssohn had at his disposal and an appreciation of historically informed performance practice can help to solve this problem.

> The *Allegro vivace* has a larger-than-life sense of euphoria and excitement

With regards to tempo, Mendelssohn didn't leave specific metronome marks for each individual movement. However, the designations of *vivace, con moto* or *presto* reflect an expectation that the music should be interpreted with considerable forward momentum. It follows, therefore, that any performance adopting sedate speeds sacrifices the freshness and vivacity of Mendelssohn's inspiration.

The one recording that takes all these factors into consideration to stunning impact is Paavo Järvi and the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich from 2024. Lean string vibrato and consequent clarity

Three other great recordings



Edward Gardner (conductor)
A beautiful recording, made in Birmingham Town Hall in 2014, furnishes this excellent performance with a sunny glow. Supported by sophisticated and tautly controlled playing from the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Gardner brings lots of energy and enthusiasm to the opening *Allegro vivace*, if not quite the unbuttoned joyousness projected by Paavo Järvi. Other highlights are the wonderfully crisp woodwind articulation and exciting build-up of tension in the finale and, in sharp contrast, a relaxed pastoral serenity in the third movement. *(Chandos CHSA5132)*

Pablo Heras-Casado (conductor)
Of the few notable period instrument recordings, Thomas Fey's with the Heidelberg Symphony Orchestra has many admirers, but the finale, taken at an outrageously fast tempo, sounds rushed and a bit out of control. Heras-Casado's more measured approach pays dividends in this 2016 recording, and the crisp and incisive delivery of the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra generates a much greater head of steam. In the opening movement, the lean string tone and sparing use of vibrato enables many

fascinating details in the wind and brass to assume more significance in the musical argument than is often the case. *(Harmonia Mundi HMC902228)*

George Szell (conductor)

There is no evidence that Szell scaled down the size of the Cleveland Orchestra in order to make this 1962 recording. But even if the overall sound he draws in the orchestral *tuttis* has considerable power, there's nothing heavy-handed about this performance, which is charmingly fleet-of foot in the opening movement and reaches a staggering level of technical accomplishment in the finale. The extremely fast tempo in the second movement is more controversial, but you soon get used to it. *(Sony SBK46536)*

And one to avoid...

Although Jordi Savall's 2023 recording presents Mendelssohn's original 1833 version alongside his 1834 tinkering of the second, third and fourth movements, this is its only virtue. The playing of the period instrument group Le Concert des Nations is flaccid and flabby, and the over- resonant acoustic plays havoc with Mendelssohn's orchestral balance. Given Savall's pre-eminence as an interpreter of Baroque music, this venture into early-Romantic repertoire seems strangely misguided.

of texture, coupled with brilliantly precise articulation punctuated by the use of hard timpani sticks in the *tutti*s, suggest a fruitful interaction with historic performance practice. But more importantly, Järvi gives us an amazingly vivid conception of each movement. There's an almost larger-than-life sense of euphoria and excitement in the opening *Allegro vivace*, and the roller-coaster ride of the finale is delivered with breathtaking bravura. Balancing this, the middle two movements offer sombre and dignified reflection in the *Andante con moto* and an irresistible warmth in the Minuet and Trio.

GETTY

Riding the *funiculà*: Franz Welser-Möst conducts *Aus Italien* by Richard Strauss (below)

Continue the journey...

We suggest works to explore after Mendelssohn's 'Italian' Symphony

The 'trumpet' in the title of ***Felix Mendelssohn***'s *Trumpet Overture* of 1826 would appear to refer to the opening fanfare, after which the instrument takes a largely backseat role. That fanfare, however, heralds ten minutes of unbridled exuberance in a showcase of contrapuntal mastery from the 16-year-old composer. **(CBSO/Edward Gardner** *Chandos CHSA5235***)**

While in Rome in 1831, Mendelssohn got to spend time with ***Hector Berlioz***. Though the Frenchman grumped that the city was 'no place for anyone with head or heart', works such as *Le carnaval romain Overture* hint that he fell under its spell at least to some extent. Drawing on material from his Rome-based opera *Benvenuto Cellini*, the overture is, as its title suggests, a riot of local colour. **(Detroit SO/Paul Paray** *Alto ALC1372***)**

Though many of Italy's own composers in the early-19th century had their attention directed towards the opera stage, symphonies were not entirely neglected. ***Vincenzo Bellini***, for instance, composed eight such works. Most are, admittedly, very short in length, but his four-movement Symphony in E flat major stays around just long enough to charm us with its songful opening *Largo Assai* and sprightly *Allegro Moderato* finale. **(Orchestra del Teatro Massimo Palermo/Diego Dini Ciacci** *Sony G010001769578***4)**

A close contemporary of Mendelssohn's 'Italian' Symphony, ***Louis Spohr***'s Symphony No. 3 begins very differently – the *Andante grave* opening of the first movement suggests gloomy times in store. But a couple of minutes in, Spohr opens the curtains to let the sunshine in and, as *Andante* becomes *Allegro*, a livelier mood is set. A sparkling *Allegro* finale, with chirping woodwind interplay, rounds things off nicely. **(Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana/Howard Shelley** *Hyperion CDA67788***)**

Fifty-six years after Mendelssohn set off for Italy, the 22-year-old ***Richard Strauss*** did likewise, resulting in the tone poem *Aus Italien*, completed soon after the composer's return to Munich. Over the work's four movements, we visit the Lazio countryside, the ruins of Ancient Rome, the beach in Sorrento and, finally, Naples, where we are treated to a rousing orchestral rendition of the song 'Funiculì, Funiculà'. **(Cleveland Orch/Franz Welser-Möst** *Cleveland Orchestra TC00001***)**

> Over four movements, we visit Lazio, Rome, Sorrento and, finally, Naples

Reviews

Recordings and books rated by expert critics

Welcome

How do you listen to music? Do you sit in a comfortable chair near some very expensive speakers? Do you use earphones, or a smart speaker? Maybe you listen in the car, or while jogging! While the quality of recorded sound still matters, we've decided to no longer give it a star rating, because people listen to music in so many different ways. So all our reviews will now have one overall star rating. This also makes things a little clearer, especially when we often refer to an album as a 'recording'... That's not the only change, with the addition of a 'Vocal' section to give Choral its own space. What hasn't changed is the variety and quality of music covered – and in this issue it's abundant, from double helpings of Shostakovich and Beethoven concertos to a bellyful of Bartók.
Michael Beek *Reviews editor*

This month's critics

John Allison, Nicholas Anderson, Michael Beek, Terry Blain, Geoff Brown, Michael Church, Christopher Cook, Martin Cotton, Misha Donat, Jessica Duchen, Rebecca Franks, George Hall, Malcolm Hayes, Claire Jackson, Michael Jameson, Stephen Johnson, Berta Joncus, John-Pierre Joyce, Nicholas Kenyon, Ashutosh Khandekar, Erik Levi, Natasha Loges, Andrew McGregor, David Nice, Freya Parr, Jeremy Pound, Steph Power, Anthony Pryer, Paul Riley, Jan Smaczny, Charlotte Smith, Jo Talbot, Anne Templer, Sarah Urwin Jones, Kate Wakeling, Alexandra Wilson

KEY TO STAR RATINGS

★★★★★	Outstanding
★★★★	Excellent
★★★	Good
★★	Disappointing
★	Poor

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

A beautifully delivered showcase for the viola

Nicholas Kenyon enjoys the marvellous musicality in Timothy Ridout's sonorous survey of solo works for the instrument

harmonia mundi
Timothy Ridout
TELEMANN | BACH | BRITTEN | SHAW

JS Bach • Britten • Telemann • Shaw

Telemann: Fantasia No. 1 in B flat major, TWV 40:14; Fantasia No. 7 in E flat major, TWV 40:20 (both Trans. viola); **Caroline Shaw:** in manus tuas (version for solo viola); **Britten:** Elegy for Solo Viola; **JS Bach:** Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004 (Trans. viola)
Timothy Ridout (viola)
Harmonia Mundi HMM902750
61:08 mins

From the shadows of chamber and orchestral music where it is so often eclipsed, the viola here emerges as a hero in its own right, the glorious sound of the unaccompanied instrument – apparently a Peregrino Di Zanetto of c.1570, though the booklet does not reveal this – resonating from the very first note and sustained throughout this exceptionally thoughtful and well-recorded collection. This is an album that proclaims the viola as a distinctive, individual solo instrument, ideally served here by its skilled interpreter.

Timothy Ridout interleaves arrangements of three 18th-century pieces with two contemporary essays. The piece by Caroline Shaw was originally written for cello, but the composer herself uses the viola on film: it's an evocative musing on a Tallis motet, imagined as if heard in a single moment, starting with mere wisps of music leading to cross-writing that inevitably points back to Bach. The unearthly quality of the writing is highlighted by a few haunting added vocal sounds, not advertised as part of the performer's role, but in Shaw's score.

The Britten is very early, a teenage work from the same months that produced the miraculous little *Hymn to the Virgin*. It was unpublished until after his death, and he never called it *Elegy*. Because he wrote it on the day he left Gresham's School, it has been

A hero emerges: Timothy Ridout draws the viola into the light

connected with his experiences there, but we can surely hear it more generally as eloquently lonely, deeply introspective; it is beautifully delivered here.

Ridout cultivates a lovely sweep and dance-like tread in the two Telemann *Fantasias* (solo violin pieces anonymously transcribed for viola). The fast movements fairly bubble with wit, but in the slow movements Ridout arguably lingers a little where, for example, the slurred pairs of notes could be more separated to help the music move. These lively but scarcely deep *Fantasias* set the scene for Bach's famous D minor Partita, transposed to a fifth below that key, so sounding in G minor, in an arrangement by fellow violist Simon Rowland-Jones. Thus it acquires a rich expressiveness that avoids the wirier tone of some violin performances of the piece, but makes remarkably little difference to the overall shape of the work.

> Ridout cultivates a lovely sweep and dance-like tread in the Telemann *Fantasias*

Ridout lifts the *Allemande* airily, and while the *Courante* hovers on the edge of too fast and the *Sarabande* arguably a little over-heavy, the *Gigue* is perfectly poised. Then comes the great *Chaconne*, in a remarkable account that manages to be both weighty and transparent. Ridout's playing is sonorous, but he also lets the music breathe: the first beat of each bar in the theme is nicely lifted, staccato variations fly sharply by and the cross-string writing acquires tremendous force. The central section in the major, starting as if tentatively, becomes rhapsodic, rhythmically free, using the multiple-stopping to push forward the ever-evolving architecture into the passionate final section. Technically, this *Chaconne* seems to sum up Ridout's whole approach as a creative combination of sustained sound with musical argument, perfectly balanced.

This is a marvellously musical and sonically superb album. ★★★★★

TING RU LAI, MATTHEW JOHNSON

Performer's notes

Timothy Ridout

Tell us about your concept for this album...

It's not often done, and it's something which I shied away from when I was younger, because it's a huge challenge to play a whole unaccompanied programme. I'd done it a few times in concert, but not that often, and it's something I started working at a bit in the Pandemic. I developed a bit more confidence and understanding of working alone. Through these last five years I've really thought about finding my own narrative with this solo repertoire.

What about the programme? It spans centuries!

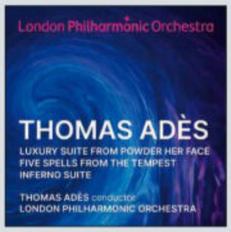
The whole programme is music that I absolutely love. I had the opportunity last year to curate three concerts at Wigmore Hall and for one of them I decided that I would like to play, for the first time, a complete unaccompanied programme. So the pieces I recorded are more or less chosen from that. It was completely clear from the beginning that I would like to record the Bach, the Telemann, the Shaw and the Britten.

What are the viola's qualities in solo repertoire?

The wonderful thing in general about the viola, which is particularly highlighted in unaccompanied repertoire, is the way in which it straddles a kind of bassy-ness – it certainly has more bass than the violin, with everything being one fifth lower – and yet it still has that brilliance. I think it's more or less possible to play everything that one can play on the violin, but you have that C string that gives this depth and resonance. The *Chaconne* works so well because it has that depth and earthiness and pain about it.

Orchestral

ORCHESTRAL CHOICE


London Philharmonic Orchestra
THOMAS ADÈS
LUXURY SUITE FROM POWDER HER FACE
FIVE SPELLS FROM THE TEMPEST
INFERNO SUITE
THOMAS ADÈS conductor
LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

A visceral insight into a great musical imagination

Steph Power is left exhilarated by the LPO's survey of operatic suites by the British composer Thomas Adès

Suite spots: Thomas Adès distils his stage music into a brilliantly intense set

Thomas Adès

Luxury Suite from Powder Her face; Five Spells from The Tempest; Inferno Suite
London Philharmonic Orchestra/Thomas Adès
LPO LPO0131 69:58 mins

The orchestral suites in this compelling live release from the London Philharmonic Orchestra do far more than précis the stage works from which they originate. Effectively looking back over some 30 years of composer and conductor Thomas Adès, they offer a visceral, exhilarating insight into his brilliant musical imagination.

Volatility is the watchword: from subtle delicacy to hedonistic excess; tender entwining to ironic parody – and scenes downright gruesome and terrifying. The combination of psycho-metaphysical enquiry with sheer virtuoso fun is at once rapturous and rupturing of norms and expectations.

The *Luxury Suite from Powder Her Face* compresses the 1995 opera's riotous tale of an elderly socialite into seven, dazzling sections. Inspired by the notorious Duchess of Argyll, opulent, off-kilter waltzes and tangos rub shoulders with an ominous wedding march, ode to a favourite perfume and more.

The orchestra here is an acerbic, swooning glory – and it brings sonic magic to the *Five Spells from The Tempest* (from the 2003 opera). With vocal parts taken by instruments, from Overture storm to the final, whistling calm of Shakespeare's island left unpeopled at last, it's a deeply uncanny journey through love, entrapment and power both elemental and otherworldly.

> Volatility is the watchword: from subtle delicacy to hedonistic excess

Descending to hell via shades of Liszt and Berlioz, the *Inferno Suite* (from the 2019/20 ballet *Dante*) depicts the torments of the damned with unabashed glee – but no small pity, and eschewing moral certainties. From queasy madcap chases to the icy dread of Satan, the suffering is both self-imposed and supernatural – and depicted with awesome intensity. ★★★★★

You can access thousands of reviews from our extensive archive on the BBC Music Magazine website at **www.classical-music.com**

Bruckner

Symphony No. 9
The Hallé/Kahchun Wong
Hallé CDHLD7566
176:02 mins (2CD)

Popular legend once held that Bruckner left only undecipherable sketches for the *Finale* of his Ninth Symphony, all appropriated following his death by Joseph Schalk. The facts speak otherwise, however, and modern scholarship has fashioned several plausible versions of a conjectural finale, all drawing upon Bruckner's original material.

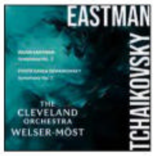
Under its new music director Kahchun Wong, the Hallé Orchestra have now recorded the Ninth, complete with the SPCM *Finale*, a collaboration between musicologists Nicola Samale, John Phillips, Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs and Giuseppe Mazzuca, premiered in 2022.

The first recording of the Ninth to include a finale was made some 40 years ago, by Eliahu Inbal and the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, for the Denon label. Much has been amended and substantially improved since, and the SPCM finale, though not definitive, lends credible completeness to the symphony, about which Bruckner scholar Hans Redlich commented in 1963, 'Rarely has the posthumous work of a great composer been treated by posterity with such persistent unfairness.'

Mark Elder left this orchestra in fine shape; here, under Kahchun Wong, the Hallé delivers a reading of considerable merit, not altogether unblemished, certainly, but ably played nevertheless. While it never outshines Paavo Järvi's epochal Bruckner Ninth with the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, this thought-provoking account warrants consideration, not least for the opportunity to explore the SPCM *Finale* in detail. *Michael Jameson*
★★★★

Eastman • Tchaikovsky

Eastman: Symphony No. 2;
Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 2
The Cleveland Orchestra/
Franz Welser-Möst
Cleveland Orchestra TCO0014
49:31 mins



The first recording of an orchestral work by Julius Eastman is a real landmark: he was almost entirely forgotten after his early death in 1990, and much of his music was lost. A slow-moving, elegiac piece, as the subtitle suggests, the symphony has a tonal base, with long melodies sometimes obscured by clouds of dense harmonies reminiscent of Ligeti. It needs a performance of concentration and careful pacing to make its full effect, and that's what it receives from the perhaps unlikely team of Welser-Möst and the Cleveland Orchestra. There's tonal beauty, an acute sense of balance and, although it is only 13 minutes long in this performance – the notation of the score allows for some latitude in improvisation – it feels much weightier and more substantial.

After that, the more conventional landscape of the Tchaikovsky comes as something of a shock. Like the Eastman, it was recorded in concert, but the sound is not as generous, with the *fortissimo* climaxes in the first movement never opening out, although the pacing is absolutely secure, and there's an alert poise in the march-like second movement – a pity that the timpani are not quite in tune though. The *Scherzo* could do with more of a kick – it is marked *molto vivace* – and tighter rhythmic control in the outer sections, but the *Finale* compensates in energy in the *Allegro vivo*, before a sentimental slowing down in the syncopated second theme, so that the movement never maintains its momentum. Overall it doesn't quite convince.
Martin Cotton ★★★

Elgar

Symphony No. 1; In the South
English Symphony Orchestra/
Kenneth Woods
ESO ESO2501 78:30 mins

EDWARD ELGAR

This recording of Elgar's First Symphony was made live at Worcester Cathedral in June 2023, at the annual Elgar Festival – 'to share a memory of an occasion and a flavour of this magical place', as conductor Kenneth Woods puts it. Interpretively, however, it does considerably more than that, as Woods and the English Symphony Orchestra's performance of the work is both stirring and idiomatic.

In tune with Elgar: Kenneth Woods conducts a stirring First Symphony

MARCO BORGGREVE, GLENN ROSS

Woods grows the initial statement of the symphony's motto theme in a pleasingly organic fashion, and the ensuing *Allegro* has a bracing strut without seeming over-emphatic. The turbulent second movement has energy and bite aplenty, with snarly brass and snapping percussion. Again, though, Woods avoids undue excitability, allowing space for the granular detail of Elgar's orchestration to register. His account of the *Adagio* is unashamedly lingering and affectionate, with the strings making particularly eloquent contributions. The finale is expansively unfolded, Woods favouring a patient accumulation of impetus and emotion over random injections of bluff ebullience. The final pages are appropriately uplifting, movingly communicating the 'massive hope for the future' Elgar intended.

A bristling, atmospheric account of the overture *In the South* is the generous encore. Here, as in the symphony, the cathedral setting can render the recorded sound a touch brash and swimmy. But that's a relatively small price to pay for performances as sympathetically attuned to Elgar as these.
Terry Blain ★★★★

Prokofiev

Symphony No. 6
London Symphony Orchestra/
Gianandrea Noseda
LSO Live LSO0390-D (digital) 41:27 mins

Gianandrea Noseda's painstaking care with dynamics and the many heart-piercing solos from the army of generals that is the London Symphony Orchestra leave us in no doubt that Prokofiev's symphony of suffering is one of the most remarkable of the 20th century. They might not at first go as deep with the pain of the lilting themes in the first movement, but the climax is suitably hair-raising, a clear-textured bludgeoning that leaves the horns wheezing in its wake. And Noseda's recent experience with Wagner's *Ring* in Zurich may have informed the long lines of Prokofiev's most disconcerting slow movement, joining one of Amfortas's themes in *Parsifal* to the main blasts of icy sound (superb trumpet in unison with violins) to underline what the by-then seriously ill composer had to say about the work ('each of us has wounds that cannot be healed'). And the moments of tenderness here – Tristan comes into play – are so magically hushed.

I'd never realised before how quiet a lot of the galop-finale is: that makes the second melody on woodwind with tuba rejoinder all the more haunting. Other interpreters have done different things with the hair-raising charge to the grimmest E flat major chord in music: Mravinsky went against the score and drew out the final apocalypse, Järvi held back the final cadence, but Noseda's as-written sudden slam is just as convincing on its own terms. As I write, we await his interpretation of the Second Symphony; all seven will eventually appear on a CD set, but hear this one now. *David Nice* ★★★★

Italiana!

Works by Albinoni, Puccini, Respighi, Rossini, Verdi et al
The Philharmonic Brass/
Riccardo Muti
Supreme Classics SMGG001 65:03 mins

THE PHILHARMONIC BRASS
RICCARDO MUTI
ITALIANA!

Veteran conductor Riccardo Muti champions the Italian *banda* tradition in this album of arrangements of Italian pieces – mostly overtures or other operatic extracts. The full instrumental complement comprises six trumpets, four horns, four trombones, two tubas, timpani and three percussionists, who can encompass every challenge placed before them.

Verdi's *Nabucco* overture opens with a solemn brass chorale followed by the thrilling moment when the entire ensemble bursts in, while Rossini's *Italian Girl in Algiers* poses different challenges. There is lightness and fleet of foot playing, maintaining the brilliance of the original.

With its five solo cellos, the opening of the *William Tell* overture transfers effectively to horns; its four very different scenes are carefully characterised, and the *Intermezzo* from Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* is realised in plangent brass sounds. There's a particularly lively account of the ballet music from *Aida*, too, with the percussion adding further flecks of colour.

Two extracts from symphonic poems by Respighi – 'Circus Games' from *Roman Festivals*, and the 'Pines of the Via Appia' from *Pines of Rome* – are, one might think, quite brassy enough in their original forms. But from a piano original comes the lyrical, Brahmsian *Notturno*, Op. 70, No. 1 (1893) by Giuseppe Martucci (1856-1909), while the sombre colours of the Albinoni *Adagio* (actually written by the 20th-century musicologist Remo Giazotto) sound surprisingly Wagnerian.

The ensemble's distinctive sounds have been expertly captured.
George Hall ★★★★

Concerto

CONCERTO CHOICE

LEA BIRRINGER
Sibelius
Szymanowski
Järnefelt
Staatsorchester
Rheinische
Philharmonie
Benjamin
Shwartz
SWR2 KULTUR

A remarkable display of panache and precision

Malcolm Hayes on why this flawless performance by violinist Lea Birringer is definitely one to remember

Steely musicianship: Lea Birringer is seemingly unfazed by the challenges of the Sibelius concerto

Järnefelt • Sibelius • Szymanowski

Järnefelt: Berceuse; **Sibelius:** Violin Concerto in D minor; **Szymanowski:** Violin Concerto No. 2
Lea Birringer (violin); Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie/Benjamin Shwartz
Rubicon RCD1193 56:40 mins

It's becoming hard to remember that Sibelius's Violin Concerto once used to be thought of as a notoriously difficult challenge for its soloist. Today's playing standards are so high that the concerto has become a standard work for violinists, and one that can be approached in many different ways besides its reputation as a spectacular showpiece. Not that Lea Birringer falls in any way short in this department. She handles the finale's near-fiendish passagework with a panache and precision suggesting that the music's technical issues seem hardly to exist. And her tuning at every point has a laser-like flawlessness.

But what makes these recordings special is the character of Birringer's musicianship. She evidently isn't concerned to make a particularly immense sound, yet her playing is never crowded out by the elaborate orchestration of Szymanowski's Second Concerto, whose idiom filters folk-music influence through sumptuous late Romanticism; her way with the music is so engaging that it here sounds close to Bartók's directness of manner. At every point in this remarkable release, her tone has a warmth, spontaneous poise, and beautifully varied range of light and shade which make the first movement of the Sibelius, especially, a memorable experience. The *Berceuse* by Armas Järnefelt, Sibelius's brother-in-law, is a short and likeable interlude between to the two concertos. And the accompaniments by the Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie under Benjamin Shwartz offer their own level of quality, with excellent clarity brought to the intricate soundworld of Szymanowski's concerto. ★★★★★

> Birringer's tone has a beautifully varied range of light and shade

You can access thousands of reviews from our extensive archive on the BBC Music Magazine website at **www.classical-music.com**

Beethoven

Violin Concerto
Nicola Benedetti (violin); Aurora Orchestra/Nicholas Collon
Decca 487 1016 41:06 mins

Beethoven's Violin Concerto is his only solo concerto for which he didn't supply his own cadenzas. Most players fill the gap with the cadenzas by Joseph Joachim or Fritz Kreisler, both of whom had the work in their regular repertoire; but on her new recording with the Aurora Orchestra, Nicola Benedetti prefers a fresher approach – one that ties in with her attempt to recapture some of the improvisatory spirit that gave rise to the concerto. It famously begins with solo timpani taps, and when Beethoven later made an arrangement of the concerto for piano and orchestra he inserted a cadenza with a march-like interlude that brings in the timpani. Without attempting to adapt the whole of Beethoven's outrageously long piano cadenza for the violin – it's been tried in the past, and it doesn't work – Benedetti uses fragments from it, including part of the march (complete with timpani), in the cadenza she's written together with the pianist Petr Limonov.

Benedetti's performance has all the lyricism and rhythmic flexibility the music needs, and her account of the slow movement, in particular, is beautifully intimate and sustained. She's admirably delicate, too, in the passages of the final *Rondo* that have the theme played in the instrument's highest register, accompanied only by *pianissimo* orchestral violins. Altogether, a real pleasure.
Misha Donat ★★★★

Timo Andres • Beethoven

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 2; **Timo Andres:** The Blind Banister
Jonathan Biss (piano); Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra/Pekka Kuusisto
Orchid Classics ORC100375 51 mins

Jonathan Biss doesn't just interpret Beethoven. He interrogates him, which is one of the reasons why his sonata cycle is so engrossing.

Digging deep: pianist Jonathan Biss gets under the skin of Beethoven's concertos

Having despatched the sonatas, he's now dealing with the concertos. And for the second concerto, he's persuaded Timo Andres to write a companion concerto entitled *The Blind Banister*, which is designed to be programmed alongside it.

Biss's illuminating commentary on the Beethoven concerto focuses on the fact that its cadenza was an afterthought, written several years after the work itself, and that it was also the only concerto cadenza which Beethoven published.

And as Biss observes, it uses the concerto's opening phrase as a springboard into the mysterious harmonic realms of the composer's late works; the abrupt silence which falls before the final flourishes seems to pose a question which the succeeding *Adagio* tenderly answers. For this is one of the young Beethoven's great philosophical slow movements. Or as Biss adroitly puts it, a conversation with the cosmos. His reading of the *Rondo* as a joyfully profane riposte to what has gone before is borne out in his spring-heeled, witty pianism.

Andres has contributed a foreword on the structure of his own concerto which is so complex that it makes the brain reel. Rather than vainly trying to pass (or fail) his test, I took the easy way out, not trying to trace the Houdini-like analytical patterns described by the composer, but simply letting the music come at me. And viewed in this way, it made a subtle and intriguing succession of effects. *Michael Church* ★★★★

Kabalevsky • Schumann

Kabalevsky: Cello Concerto No. 2;
Schumann: Cello Concerto in A minor
Theodor Lyngstad (cello); Copenhagen Philharmonic/ Eva Ollikainen
OUR Recordings 8.226926 53:29 mins

If you had experienced these performances in a concert, you'd be delighted with the calibre of playing and the neatness of orchestral partnership. Norwegian cellist, Theodor Lyngstad is an extremely talented performer, but electing to record Schumann's Cello Concerto really puts his artistry under the microscope. The main difference between this new version and some other highly rated recordings lies in the limited degree of nuance Lyngstad brings to the phrase and the chiselling of notes to create a delectable subtlety of line. This is especially the case in the opening movement, although the ensuing *Langsam* is gracefully delivered, with particularly astute voicing of the double stops. The *finale* fairly skips along, but is still less shaped and strongly characterised than in Steven Isserlis's superb performance partnering Christoph Eschenbach and the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie on RCA.

It's a great idea to couple the Schumann with Kabalevsky's undervalued Second Concerto. His musical language, especially in the haunting and tender opening to the first movement, seems to combine the brittleness of Shostakovich with the melancholic melodiousness of Myaskovsky. Here Lyngstad is certainly eloquent. But direct comparisons with other highly regarded versions from Steven Isserlis and the work's dedicatee Daniil Shafran illustrate the limitations of this performance, which doesn't achieve the same level of poignancy and dramatic commitment. Lyngstad is dexterous, and technically impressive, but again far less compelling in terms of characterisation. Ultimately, his playing brings fewer colours to the overall tonal and dramatic palette. *Jo Talbot* ★★★

Shostakovich

Cello Concertos*; Violin Concertos**
*Yo-Yo Ma (cello), **Baibe Skride (violin); Boston Symphony Orchestra/Andris Nelsons
*DG *486 6949/**486 6946*
62:04 mins/80:01 mins*

These two pairs of recordings have one curious thing in common: in both cases it's the lesser-known second concerto that comes off better than the first. Other than that, they're very different. Yo-Yo Ma, as expected, is on fine form in both cello concertos. But the overall impression left by the first is that he's most at home, not in the swaggering, mocking first movement, or in the gritty, ultimately heroic finale, but in the more inward-looking lyricism of the second movement, and particularly in the haunted soliloquy of the following cadenza. The Second Concerto however, long dismissed by critics and by plenty of musicians, holds the attention right the way through. Its riddles aren't exactly solved, but there's a wonderful sense of line singing through to the end, despite occasional bizarre interjections, and opening out beautifully in the finale's short but telling major key song cadence.

It's precisely that sense of the long, continuously evolving line – so characteristic of Shostakovich – that's largely lacking in Baibe Skride's account of the First Violin Concerto, and only intermittently present in the Second. The opening of the First Concerto's darkly rapt *Nocturne* is very beautiful, and so too are the initial stages of the *Passacaglia*. The trouble is, there isn't a strong counterbalance to all this refined beauty. Where is the barbed humour, the razor-sharp wit, the painful cathartic release? The dagger isn't just sheathed; it's hidden safely in a locked drawer, in another room. The finale sounds neither manic nor defiant, more dispirited. The finale of the Second Concerto comes off better, and this time there is a sense that we're reaching the end of a journey, but it can't be said to have been a consistently rewarding one. *Stephen Johnson*
★★★★ (Cello Concertos)
★★ (Violin Concertos)

British Piano Concertos

Works by Addison, Cannon and Chagrin
Simon Callaghan (piano); BBC National Orchestra of Wales/ William Boughton
Lyrita SRCD 444 66:41 mins

Twentieth-century British piano concertos keep tumbling off the library shelves: this is the third volume in Lyrita's series highlighting some of the genre's forgotten curios and delights. Simon Callaghan's fingerwork is as attractive as ever, particularly when lightly prancing round the piano's top register during Philip Cannon's 1951 *Concertino*, a sprightly neo-classical creation whose English atmosphere doesn't preclude chugging rhythmic reminders that the composer occasionally took lessons with Paul Hindemith.

Some of the works offer fewer delights than before, notably Francis Chagrin's concerto, whose public airing in 1944 caused one critic to note that its 'ideas were less advanced than their technical presentation'. The result? Pretentiousness. The charge remains valid even after the composer's revisions, with unrewarding motifs pushed too far, and the light touch familiar from Chagrin's film scores largely stifled in the attempt to fill a grander

ZUZANNA SPECJAL, BENJAMIN EALOVEGA

canvas. Callaghan and William Boughton's orchestra pitch in with enthusiasm nonetheless.

Cinematic echoes rise to the fore in the jaunty opening theme of John Addison's *Concertino,* which could easily have served as title music for a Boulting Brothers' 1950s comedy. Both this and the later *Conversation Piece* have their own problems knitting motley ingredients together, though Addison's fleet-footed technique and sense of humour, allied to Callaghan's twinkling fingers, save the day. It's left to Cannon to offer the sturdiest offering in an album that shows that forgotten British piano concertos can spread pleasure, but have their limitations. *Geoff Brown* ★★★

Concertos

Works by Thierry Pécou, Ramon Lazkano and Alex Nante
Alexandre Tharaud (piano); Orchestre National de Lyon/Jonathan Stockhammer et al
Erato 2173249185 78:14 mins

Western composers have long been fascinated by Gamelan music: Britten documented his fascination with the percussion he encountered in Bali in letters dispatched during his 1956 tour, and Steve Reich's focus found its way into works like *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ* (1973). But while, as Thierry Pécou points out, 'for the composers of the second half of the 20th century, journeying to Bali was something of an equivalent to the pilgrimage to Bayreuth for those at the end of the 19th,' contemporary music attempts to integrate rather than appropriate. In *Cara Bali Concerto* (2020), Pécou pianistically recreates the timbres associated with Balinese instruments; Alexandre Tharaud evokes the metallic shades of metallophones and gongs – sometimes with a ferociously percussive touch. The harmonic mode of the second movement ushers in a dreamy cadenza; Tharaud switches between virtuosic fluidity and bell-like beats.

One-movement concertante work *Mare Marginis* (2022) by Ramon Lazkano is richly decorated with timbral extremes: the resonance of cluster chords provide a springboard for notes to jump into action. This sculptural sound is to the fore in two cadenzas, in which Tharaud treats the piano as clay, moulding large, intriguing forms. It's nicely contrasted by Alex Nante's 2021 *Luz de lejos* (Light from afar), which brilliantly subverts Baroque styles while retaining recognisable structures. From the crystalline phrasing in *Preludio* to the thrillingly futuristic *Toccato,* Tharaud etches patterns and poetry with panache.
Claire Jackson ★★★★

Maestra

Piano Concertos by Carwithen and Julia Perry
Samantha Ege (piano); Lontano Orchestra/Odaline de la Martinez
Lorelt LNT150 44:24 mins

This album may be slight, at around 45 minutes, but it makes a bold statement. Two contrasting piano concertos by historical female composers which, need it be said again, almost inevitably means these pieces have been relatively rarely heard. While they are not an obvious pairing, they offer strength in stylistic opposites, giving us a glimpse of two fascinating creative voices born either side of the Atlantic in the 1920s. Julia Perry became a musical modernist admired by Copland; Doreen Carwithen forged a career as film composer, in an industry dominated by men.

Uniting the two on record are pianist-scholar Samantha Ege and conductor Odaline de la Martinez, with the Lontano Orchestra. They gel well for Perry's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in Two Uninterrupted Speeds* (1969), a meticulous, mesmerising work of two movements, each just under six minutes. Time expands in 'Slow', the piano a cosmic voyager in a spacious sky painted by strings and wind, while 'Fast' unleashes rhythmic energy, with repeated gestures and pared-back orchestration whose colours catch the ear. Perry has an individual, striking voice.

Carwithen's *Concerto for Piano and Strings* (1948) is cast in a more traditional Romantic concerto mould, that's to say three movements with the piano a protagonist in dialogue with the strings. It has a cinematic vividness and an ambitious sweep. The first movement contrasts angular writing with a luscious, Warsaw-Concerto-esque theme, while in the central *Lento* a solo violin falls like sharp light in shadows. The concerto ends with a propulsive finale. Ege gives her considerable all, though a fuller orchestral sound would have upped the thrill factor. Still, this is a valuable recording, well worth hearing. *Rebecca Franks* ★★★★

Recorder Concertos from Sanssouci

Works by CPE Bach, Benda, Graun and Quantz
Isaac Makhdoomi (recorder); Ensemble Piccante
Prospero PROSP0112 59:52 mins

The recorder is enjoying a surge of popularity, for which in some considerable measure we must thank the late Frans Brüggen. He, more than anyone, demonstrated the expressive and virtuosic possibilities of which the instrument is capable and his legacy lives on in the ever-increasing number of players for whom he was an inspiration.

Isaac Makhdoomi is among the new generation of recorder players whose understanding of recorders, their manufacture and their sound spectrum, lifts the instruments to dazzling heights. Bravely, he has chosen three concertos intended for the transverse flute/violin, as well as an aria from Carl Heinrich Graun's Berlin opera, *L'Orfeo,* which he has arranged for treble recorder. The concertos are by three prominent composers and instrumentalists associated with the court of Frederick the Great. Quantz – his concerto requires key transposition - was his star flautist who in addition taught the musically gifted Frederick. Franz Benda was leader of the orchestra and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach was court harpsichordist.

Each of the concertos to a varying extent embraces the *Empfindsamer Stil* or sensitive style prevalent in north Germany in the middle of the 18th century. Makhdoomi's virtuosity makes a convincing case for plundering traverso flute repertoire for descant and treble recorders, though I do not wholly subscribe to his suggestion that the ascendancy of the flute had much if anything to do with a lack of expertise in the earlier construction of recorders. His own Ensemble Piccante, comprising strings and harpsichord provides lively and responsive support.
Nicholas Anderson ★★★★

Women

Works by Boyle, Smyth, Anne Dudley, Rachel Portman et al
Esther Abrami (violin); Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra/ Irene Delgado-Jiménez
Sony Classical 19802900182 60:26 mins

There's no doubt Esther Abrami is something of a sensation. While classically trained, the French violinist has made her name principally through social media, not least her highly popular TikTok account. Abrami signed with Sony in 2021 and her last album, *Cinéma,* presented an inviting selection of mainstream and more unusual film score arrangements. This new release showcases 'fourteen remarkable [women] composers across history and a range of genres, spanning newly composed works and rediscovered masterpieces.' Moving between works for violin and orchestra, string quartet and duo arrangements with piano and guitar, the album also includes a world-premiere recording of Ina Boyle's late-Romantic Violin Concerto which receives a lyrical if somewhat restrained performance from Abrami.

Abrami's playing elsewhere is mostly appealing, albeit not always projected with a great deal of power. One highlight is *Lua Branca* by Brazilian songwriter Chiquinha Gonzaga, arranged here for violin and piano by Abrami herself, and performed with wit and delicacy. In certain tracks, however, Abrami's otherwise silvery tone is somewhat over-produced (for instance in Shimomura's *Valse Di Fantastica* from *Final Fantasy XV*) to the extent that the sound feels almost synthetic. It is a shame to find some of the album given over to this kind of sonic airbrushing, but perhaps to other ears it might seem well-suited to this kind of repertoire. In any case, the range of composers included and Abrami's undoubted ability to welcome new audiences with such warmth is certainly something to celebrate.
Kate Wakeling ★★★

BBC wildlife

TRY 3 ISSUES FOR £6*

when you subscribe to *BBC Wildlife* magazine

BBC wildlife
WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR WINNERS
The TRAV
OCTOBER 2024
A NEW HOPE
The sanctuary giving chimps a foothold in Sierra Leone
Plus
How cattle can help wildlife
Return of the mammoths
Essential guide to great white sharks
DECEMBER 2024
THE BEST NATURE BOOKS OF 2024
SIA
TTENBOROUGH
s of the epic new BBC series

- Try your first **3 issues for just £6***
- Continue to pay just **£22.99 every 6 issues – saving 30%** off the shop price
- **Free UK delivery** direct to your door in environmentally friendly wrapping
- **Never miss an issue** of the world's oldest and best-selling wildlife magazine!

Subscribe online or call us...

Visit **www.ourmediashop.com/WLHA25**

or call **03330 162 121**† QUOTE CODE **WLHA25**

*3 issues for £6 available to UK Direct Debit orders only. After your first 3 issues, your subscription will continue at just £22.99 every 6 issues, saving more than 30% on the shop price. If you cancel within two weeks of receiving your second issue, you will pay no more than £6. Your subscription with start with the next available issue. †UK calls will cost the same as other standard fixed line numbers (starting 01 or 02) and are included as part of any inclusive or free minutes allowances (if offered by your phone tariff). Outside of free call packages, call charges from mobile phones will cost between 3p and 55p per minute. Lines are open Mon to Fri 8am-6pm and Sat 9am-1pm. Offer ends 31st January 2026.

Opera & Stage

OPERA CHOICE

Bartók
Duke Bluebeard's Castle
Karina Canellakis
RINAT SHAHAM · GÁBOR BRETZ
NETHERLANDS RADIO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

A blood-curdling and brilliant Bartók *Bluebeard*

Christopher Cook is chilled to the bone by a concert take on the composer's nightmarish masterpiece

Detailed and powerful: Karina Canellakis and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic put on a terrific, and terrifying, show

Bartók

Duke Bluebeard's Castle

Rinat Shaham (mezzo-soprano), Gábor Bretz (bass-baritone); Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra/ Karina Canellakis

Pentatone PTC 5187 225 60:28 mins

A great performance of *Bluebeard's Castle* banishes cultural speculation about Bartók's only music drama. As Judith demands each of the castle's seven doors be opened, who ponders if this is Symbolism or Expressionism, a dark folk tale or a Freudian fairy story? It's about blood-spilling power and human disappointment – the passing of all things. And a man and his new young wife.

Gábor Bretz as Bluebeard and Rinat Shaham, his Judith, are magnificent. Bretz a lyric bass-baritone, who in the Prologue seems to yearn that things may be different this time, begs for the sunshine as Judith opens the Fourth Door into his garden. Shaham never wheedles or pleads; she is simply unable to curtail her curiosity. Both take vocal risks: he is almost lyrical when we hear the lake of tears while she opts for soft singing when the mighty fifth door crashes open. Both are magnificent in the final Duet.

> Karina Canellakis conducts the orchestra as if her life depended on it

Karina Canellakis conducts the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic as if her life depended on it, understanding the aching angularity of Bartók's score and exploring every musical shiver and chordal creak. Climaxes are perfectly placed and there's an admirable attention to detail – the anxious ostinato for strings in the Prologue and the unsettling drum beat that heralds the opening of the Sixth Door. Chilling. ★★★★★

You can access thousands of reviews from our extensive archive on the BBC Music Magazine website at **www.classical-music.com**

Jake Heggie

Before It All Goes Dark

Ryan McKinny, Megan Marino; Music of Remembrance Ensemble/ Joseph Mechavich

Euro Arts 4831 50:47 mins

BEFORE IT ALL GOES DARK

The irresistible push and pull of Erwin Schulhoff's *Jazz Etudes for Solo Piano* is echoed in Jake Heggie's curtain raiser to *Before It All Goes Dark* (2024). A growling bassline decorated with a glissandi-rich ear worm introduces Mac (Ryan McKinny), a Chicagoan who has discovered he was heir to a priceless art collection stolen by the Nazis. The meta narrative – Mac is listening to jazz to calm him, represented by that addictive beat – is underlined by an inventive structure: a prologue featuring music by composers murdered in the Holocaust precedes the opera proper. The Music of Remembrance Ensemble creates an imagined chamber music recital in Emil Freund's Prague salon, circa 1939. Gene Scheer's exposition-heavy, easy-to-follow libretto is a fictionalised account of a real story. Gerald 'Mac' McDonald was unaware of his Jewish ancestry until a journalist from the *Chicago Tribune* tracked him down as part of an investigation inspired by his own family's experiences. That earlier bassline is recast as something more ominous – a chugging train taking prisoners to unknown tragedies; the museum refusing Mac his paintings. Megan Marino's mezzo-soprano (in multiple roles) is a shiny foil to McKinny's bass-baritone. *Claire Jackson* ★★★★

Lully

Alceste

Véronique Gens, Nathan Berg et al; Choeur de l'Opéra Royal; Les Épopées

Versailles CVS149 179:33 mins (3CD)

LULLY · ALCESTE
VERSAILLES

When Lully and his librettist Pierre Quinault presented *Alceste* to Louis XIV at the Palace of Versailles in 1674, they did more than just set a dainty operatic dish before the king. Their second *tragédie en musique* was nothing less than the definitive model for French opera for the next 100 years.

With its assimilation of drama, song, instrumental music, chorus and dance, *Alceste* is one of Lully's most immediately engaging operatic works. This rigorously researched, exquisitely performed and beautifully packaged recording brings out all of its attractive qualities. An experienced cast is led by the stately and expressive Véronique Gens in the title role. She is paired with a lithe-voiced Cyril Auvity as Admète, the king of Thessaly who is spared death after Alceste takes his place in the Underworld. They are joined by the darkly pensive Nathan Berg as Alcide, the hero who rescues Alceste and then nobly hands her back to his love rival Admète. Supporting roles are also expertly handled, notably Guilhem Worms as a comic Charon, and Geoffroy Buffière as a stern but magnanimous Pluto.

Versailles' Royal Opera Chorus gives ancient Greek-style characterisation to its roles as participant and commentator, while Les Épopées excel in the dance *divertissements* and in passages of instrumental scene painting. The harpsichord ripples accompanying the Seine and Marne rivers during the Prologue and Cerberus's barks on lower strings in Act Four are alone worth repeated listening. *John-Pierre Joyce* ★★★★★

Puccini

Le Villi

Anita Hartig (soprano), Kang Wang (tenor) et al; Bavarian Radio Choir; Munich Radio Orchestra/ Ivan Repušić

BR Klassik 900359 60:09 mins

PUCCINI
LE VILLI

Le Villi was Puccini's debut opera, first performed in 1884 when he was barely beyond his student days. Here we find him in Romantic, supernatural mode, worlds apart from his later realist milieu, yet the distinctive Puccinian musical voice – glorious Italianate melody blended with expressive, almost Wagnerian orchestral writing – was already emerging. It is a work rarely performed on stage, not least because much of the action is conveyed via purely orchestral music, but this makes it an ideal Puccini opera to enjoy on album.

Recorded live in concert in Munich last October, this polished recording features three principals whose performances are unostentatious yet musically pleasing. A velvet-voiced Anita Hartig characterises the role of Anna as winningly modest and gentle, and her duet with Kang Wang's charismatic Roberto is full of tender introspection, blossoming into full-blown passion. Wang brings a real sense of remorse and terror to the later numbers where he is haunted by his actions, especially the showstopper 'Torna ai felici dì', while Boris Pinkhasovich (Guglielmo) conveys bitter desperation at the loss of his daughter. Ivan Repušić conducts the Munich Radio Orchestra and Choir with an easy elegance. The orchestral playing is languid in the love music, whip-crackingly energetic during the witches' sabbath, and eerie after Anna's death. Overall, a thoughtful and satisfying introduction to the lesser-known Puccini. *Alexandra Wilson* ★★★★

Dutch courage: Lise Davidsen thrills in Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer*

R Strauss

Salome

Malin Byström (soprano) et al; Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra/ Edward Gardner

Chandos CHSA5356(2) 99:48 mins (2CD)

STRAUSS
SALOME

Strauss's score remains one of the most astounding of all time, operatic and otherwise, and it's a high achievement indeed that the Bergen Philharmonic's playing under Edward Gardner, stunningly engineered here, lets us hear more detail in it than on any other recording (the super-analytical Sinopoli's included). Turn to Salome's Dance for instant proof: outstandingly personable solos from oboe and flute, slow-burn Viennese waltzes starting at the right quiet dynamics – Gardner is painstaking in that respect – and the spinning-top sequence almost unbelievable in its hallucinatory quality. Gardner's pace seems ideal, not lingering over John the Baptist's music, mixed up as it is in some very nasty judgments, though keeping the mystery of his descending-fourths theme.

Though the balance between orchestra and voices comes across as ideal in this live concert performance from Edinburgh's Usher Hall, the vocal ideal is realised perhaps only in Brör Magnus Tødenes's Narraboth. Malin Byström's Salome has been lauded on stage; vocally, her timbre is a bit mezzoid at first for a curious teenager, but while the cut's not there, the pearly upper register helps with the ache for what might have been in the finale scene. And, though Katarina Dalayman and Gerhard Siegel are hugely characterful, can we one day have the horrible Herods cast not with veterans but bright-voiced singers of approximately the right age (30s, probably)? I was surprised by wear and tear in Johan Reuter's voice; Jokanaan, too, needs to be young-ish, with clarion upper register. Yet this recording is a must for Gardner's interpretation. *David Nice* ★★★★

Wagner

Der fliegende Holländer

Lise Davidsen (soprano), Gerald Finley (baritone); Orchestra and Chorus of Norwegian National Opera/Edward Gardner

Decca 487 0952 131 mins (2CD)

Der fliegende Holländer

Whenever Lise Davidsen makes an operatic landing, it's a big event: this time it's as Senta for a live recording of *Der fliegende Holländer* with Norwegian National Opera in the Oslo opera house. It won't hurt Decca's sales to quote her saying this is the first and last time she sings Senta. 'It's a role I was asked to sing for a long time, and I waited because I thought it was too demanding,' she says. With so many other Wagner roles coming her way, she may not have time.

One of this work's challenges lies in the fact that it doesn't take off emotionally until the crucial encounter between the protagonists in the middle of Act 2. There's a lot of banality to come first, notably much 'Yohoho' stuff from the sailors, answered by silly chants of 'Hum and sing' from the female spinners. Edward Gardner's response to all that – and to the great storm – is to generate massively pulsating energy every second of the way.

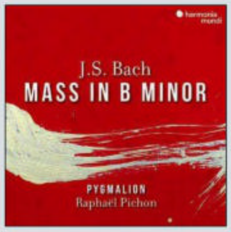
Gerald Finley's first solo gives us a penetrating glimpse of the Dutchman's state of mind, but it's only when he and Davidsen sing their great life-changing duet that the drama takes off. No matter that the real subject of the work is neither Heine's story nor Wagner's near-shipwreck: this Dutchman must be suffering from some form of paranoid depression which becomes contagious. But Wagner didn't think in such terms.

Finley and Davidsen sound like sleep-walkers as they plumb the depths of their shared predicament, and they are supported by a first-class cast. Stanislas de Barbeyrac's agonised Erik and Brindley Sherratt's banal Daland are vividly realised, while Eirik Grøtvedt's Steersman periodically injects a lovely note of tenor sweetness. *Michael Church* ★★★★★

GETTY, FREDRIK ARFF

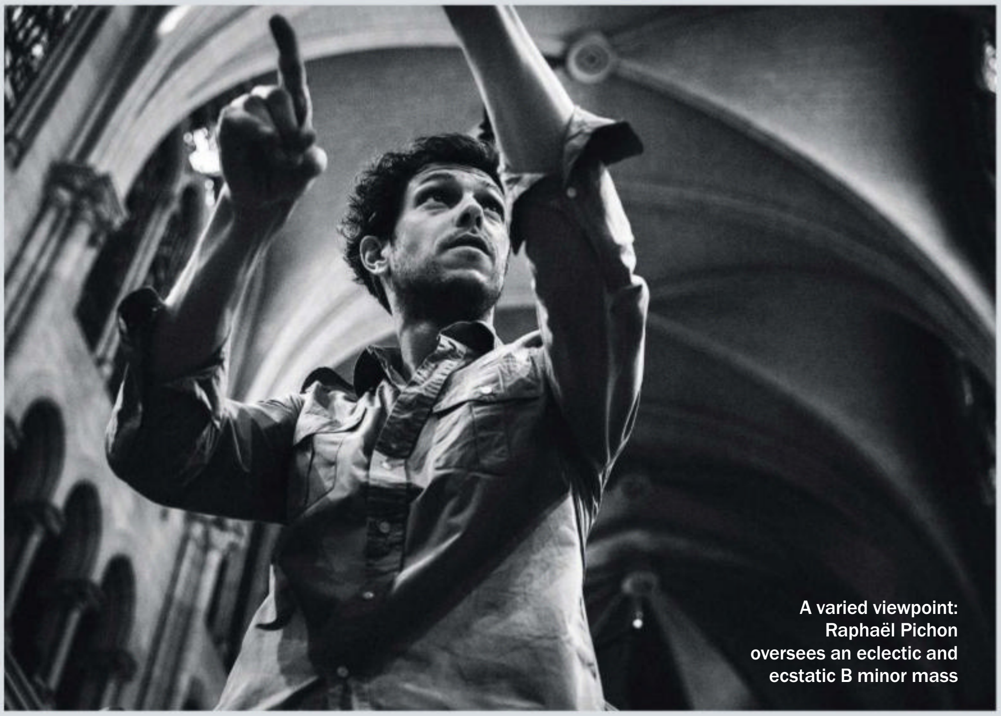
Choral

CHORAL CHOICE



A blazing B minor mass from Pygmalion and co.

Alexandra Wilson says this latest interpretation of Bach's mighty work is exceptional and a must-listen



A varied viewpoint: Raphaël Pichon oversees an eclectic and ecstatic B minor mass

FRED MORTAGNE

JS Bach

B minor Mass

Julie Roset (soprano), Beth Taylor (mezzo-soprano), Lucile Richardot (alto) et al; Pygmalion/Raphaël Pichon

Harmonia Mundi HMM902754.55 107 mins (2CD)

This new recording of Bach's Mass in B Minor from Pygmalion, Raphaël Pichon's period-instrument band and choir, is an interpretation of tremendous variety, every movement distinctively crafted. Some (such as the two Kyries and the Qui Tollis) are strikingly slow, yet in a way that feels intense and introspective, never ponderous. Others, such as the Gloria and Credo, set off at a tremendous lick, almost inviting us to get up and dance. Elsewhere, Pichon gives us a spirited Cum Sancto Spiritu full of rhythmic verve, an expansive Sanctus in which the voices reach ecstatically for the heavens, and a quasi-three-dimensional Dona nobis pacem, which seems to approach from a distance and explode into a triumphant blaze of sound.

Choral and instrumental passages are impressively disciplined and well-characterised throughout. The chorus's attention to detail in articulating text and shaping phrases is second-to-none, and there are delicious moments aplenty in the orchestral playing: dramatic spear-like swipes from the strings in the Crucifixus and gorgeous, blossoming winds in the Et in Spiritum. The soloists, all specialists in this repertoire, are superb: a particular highlight is the sprightly Christe Eleison from the warm-toned mezzo Beth Taylor and the soprano Julie Roset, who combines clarity and purity of tone with an immense *joie de vivre*. There are countless recordings of this work from which to choose, but every choral music enthusiast would be well-advised to add this dynamic, imaginative new reading to their collection. It is truly exceptional ★★★★★

> The Gloria and Credo set off at a tremendous lick, almost inviting us to dance

You can access thousands of reviews from our extensive archive on the BBC Music Magazine website at **www.classical-music.com**

Bruckner • Gesualdo

Motets etc

Monteverdi Choir & Orchestra/ Jonathan Sells

SDG SDG736 59:24 mins

At first glance the combination of Bruckner (d1896) and Gesualdo (d1613) might seem a little odd but it really is not. Anton Bruckner was extremely well versed in liturgical music and the unaccompanied choral style. He was also part of the revivalist Cecilian movement in the 19th century. This instructive and intriguing collection has been put together by Jonathan Sells who has long directed the acclaimed Solomon's Knot ensemble and has now taken over the Monteverdi Choir.

The first item is actually a recording of Wagner's arrangement of the *Stabat Mater* by Palestrina whose works were a primary focus of the revivalist movement. The large choir here and the intense expressiveness are what Wagner would have expected. He does occasionally combine Palestrina's two-choir effects into one, but mostly the original techniques are preserved. Sells here and elsewhere cleverly uses contrasting dynamics successfully to shape the works musically, but given that most have rather mournful texts the sonic exultations can sometimes seem like effects without causes. A few of Bruckner's works are surprisingly archaic, as is the case with *Salvum fac populum*, framed by serene plainsongs, and sung with a delicious liturgical stillness. Two of the most famous works here are Bruckner's *Locus iste* and Gesualdo's *O vos omnes*. The exotic harmonies in both expose the family resemblance between the styles of the two composers (though Gesualdo is even more experimental in his secular music) and the Monteverdi Choir is admirably equipped to render the chord changes with security and warmth.
Anthony Pryer ★★★★

Elgar

The Kingdom

Francesca Chiejina et al; Crouch End Festival Chorus; London Mozart Players/David Temple

Signum SIGCD896 89:27 mins (2CD)

Elgar The Kingdom

The Kingdom was the fourth and last of Elgar's oratorios, and is nowadays almost totally eclipsed by *The Dream of Gerontius* in terms of popularity. It has, though, always had fervent advocates, among them that great Elgarian Adrian Boult, and David Temple, conductor of this new recording. 'A gem from the first note to the last', is Temple's verdict on the piece.

Temple's devotion to *The Kingdom* is immediately obvious from his animated account of the orchestral prelude. In 'Seek first the Kingdom of God', the opening number, the singing of the Crouch End Festival Chorus also makes an instant impression. 120-strong in number, the singers bring an admirable communal concentration to bear on matters of phrasing and diction, and their large-scale, tonally glowing sound is something of a throwback (a welcome one at that) to a full-hearted style of performing oratorio which is much less common than it used to be.

The four soloists are ardently committed, and combine thrillingly with choir and orchestra in Temple's rousing account of the 'Pentecost' section's conclusion. The recording, made under studio conditions at the recently restored Alexandra Palace Theatre in London, is impactful, and the marked left-right panning of the choir helps clarify Elgar's part-writing.

Previous releases of *The Kingdom* by Boult, Slatkin, Hickox and Elder all have their attractions, but Temple yields to none of them in his consistently cogent and energised interpretation. His approach is inspiring, and I suspect both newcomers to the work and seasoned Elgarians will love it.
Terry Blain ★★★★

Greene

Jephtha

Andrew Staples (tenor), Mary Bevan (soprano), Michael Mofidian (bass) et al; Early Opera Company/ Christian Curnyn

Chandos CHSA 0408(2) 99:52 mins (2CD)

This is the first-ever recording of Maurice Greene's 1737 oratorio *Jephtha*, the strengths of which – mellifluous 'English'-style airs, easy-to-comprehend recitative, densely textured choruses – are brilliantly illuminated by the artists of the Early Opera Company. Preceding Handel's *Jephtha* by 14 years, Greene's oratorio is a very different animal: composed for a closed society of churchmen and professional musicians, the work is a *drame philosophe* whose characters reflect on their sacrifices. In the story, the war hero Jephtha is slowly persuaded to lead the people of Gilead in battle, to win which he vows to sacrifice the first creature he sees – which turns out to be his daughter, who accepts her fate.

Soprano Mary Bevan is incandescent as the luckless daughter, adjusting her expression and vocal quality to her character's fluctuating extremes: sunny in celebration of her father's victory, tender in wondering at his distress, anguished as she contemplates death. This final scenario provokes an aria more than seven minutes long, whose repeat section Bevan stuffs with stunning extemporisations. Tenor Andrew Staples infuses his Jephtha with muscle and soul, bringing sinew to his angry numbers and sweet vulnerability in his laments.

Top-tier vocalists exploit the drama of Greene's English anthem-style choruses, with biting delivery in homophonic sections and bold, distinct voicing in imitative sections. Admittedly, Greene's score has its weak spots, but the Midas touch of director Christian Curnyn turns even these passages into gold. In particular, the director and his excellent band use instrumental music to tell a story far beyond what Greene's score indicates. All told, this is a fascinating recording.
Berta Joncus ★★★★

Angel of Peace

Hildegard: Ave, generosa; **Arvo Pärt:** Tribute to Caesar; Da pacem Domine; Magnificat; **Will Todd:** I shall be an angel of peace; **Taverner:** Gaude plurimum; O splendor gloriae; **Anna Clyne:** Orbits

The Sixteen/Harry Christophers

CORO COR16210 68:02 mins

ANGEL of PEACE

Another year, another 'Choral Pilgrimage' from The Sixteen. These concert tours around Britain, taking in historic cathedrals and churches, have become an annual fixture in the musical calendar, showcasing choral traditions spanning six centuries. This recording celebrates the 25th pilgrimage, with a theme of inner peace and calm contemplation – two things that the world needs now more than ever, it seems.

Harry Christophers brings his usual thoughtfulness, elegance and a sense of balance and symmetry to the programming, while his singers make effortless stylistic leaps across the centuries. The inspirational role of women in music is a recurring element, with many of the settings centred around the figure of the Virgin Mary. We begin in the 12th century with the Abbess Hildegard of Bingen's delicate, meditative plainsong 'Ave, generosa', juxtaposed with Arvo Pärt's austere, measured 'Tribute to Caesar'. Pärt, who is 90 this year, provides an anchor to this year's programme, with three works that seem to encompass ancient and contemporary choral soundworlds.

There are two substantial and accomplished new works: Will Todd's serene 'I shall be an angel of peace' (a Genesis Foundation Commission); and a 'companion' work commissioned by The Sixteen, 'Orbits' by Anna Clyne, an evocative setting of words by Rilke, for violin and choir. Sarah Sexton's dynamic, expressive solo violin, swirling around the choir, features in both new commissions.

Two glorious extended motets by the 15th century's John Taverner find The Sixteen at the height of their considerable powers, revelling in the brio of Renaissance polyphony with its meditative solo voice passages contrasted with the ebullience of the full choir. This is inspiring, immaculate music-making of the highest order – nothing less than you would expect from an ensemble that can be counted among Britain's great cultural treasures.
Ashutosh Khandekar ★★★★★

BRIEF NOTES

Rorem Choral Works

Piatti String Quartet; St Martin's Voices/Andrew Earis

Resonus RES10356 56:36 mins

Ned Rorem Choral Works

Not the first works you'd think about when considering the late American composer, but this decades-spanning selection shows it's an area of Rorem's output that is more than worth your time. St Martin's Voices (and the Piatti Quartet in three pieces) more than do justice to this music, imbued as it is with no small amount of drama, soul and great beauty.
Michael Beek ★★★★★

Dazzling Light Choral Works by Howells, Jonathan Dove, John Rutter, Eric Whitacre et al

Ensemble Altera/Christopher Lowrey ***Alpha Classics ALPHA1120 71:18 mins***

DAZZLING LIGHT

Light in all its forms is the inspiration for this clever concept album, and although the composers date from the Renaissance to the current day, there's a sense of reverence throughout. Bathed in a haze of sound, the crystal-clear voices of Ensemble Altera delight in held suspensions and crunchy chords. Glorious! *Charlotte Smith* ★★★★★

Sun Moon Stars Rain Works by Elgar, Eric Whitacre et al

Phoenix Chorale/Christopher Gabbitas

Signum Classics SIGCD885 72:56 mins

SUN MOON STARS RAIN

Under the direction of former King's Singer Christopher Gabbitas, the Phoenix Chorale are in fine fettle in this skyward-looking selection of choral music – largely contemporary, with works by Elgar and Sullivan briefly turning the clock back. There's a nice blend to the choir's sound, with some characterful solo voices emerging in the longer works by Erika Lloyd and Dale Trumbore. *Jeremy Pound* ★★★★

Vocal

VOCAL CHOICE

signum CLASSICS
THE COMPLETE SONGS OF
RAVEL
Malcolm Martineau

This complete Ravel song survey is a box of delights

Paul Riley **enjoys the latest foray into French vocal works by pianist Malcolm Martineau and friends**

Standout turn: mezzo-soprano Paula Murrihy shines in Ravel's *Shéhérazade*

Ravel

Complete Songs

Lorna Anderson (soprano), Nicky Spence (tenor) et al; Sacconi Quartet; Malcolm Martineau (piano)

Signum Classics SIGCD870 133:12 mins (2CD)

With sets devoted to the complete songs of Duparc, Fauré and Poulenc, pianist Malcolm Martineau has established formidable Francophile credentials, so it's not surprising to find the Ravel anniversary sparking yet another completist mission – a mission enlisting nine singers and a determination to explore the legacy chronologically. Such a vocal plenitude might seem extravagant, but variety is ensured, and an instrumental ensemble anchored by the Sacconi Quartet breaches the piano near-hegemony for the groundbreaking *Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé*.

The result is a journey through 40 years of song that starts with a bells-infused 'Ballade' (sung with poised rapture by the fresh-voiced Sarah Dufresne) which announces an 18-year-old composer already confident in his craft. Assigned to baritone John Chest, journey's end is *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* – the final drinking song dispatched with a roistering élan that caps the knowing insouciance of the opening 'Chanson Romanesque'. In between these first and last thoughts some of the less well-known standalone songs have nothing to fear set alongside repertoire landmarks such as such as *Chansons madécasses* or *Shéhérazade* – for which mezzo Paula Murrihy is joined in the second song by Lisa Friend's mellifluous flute. A particular highlight is baritone Simon Keenlyside's *Histoires naturelles*. From the peacock's swagger to a kingfisher-inspired epiphany his suave storytelling rejoices in Renard's mordant characterisations. But above all, subtly shaded, Martineau's pellucid pianism holds the project gloriously together. The result is a jewel box of riches that sounds like a labour of love, and of a love requited. ★★★★★

> Martineau's pellucid pianism holds the project gloriously together

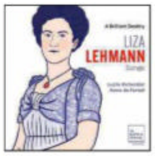
You can access thousands of reviews from our extensive archive on the BBC Music Magazine website at **www.classical-music.com**

Lehmann

Songs (A Brilliant Destiny)

Lucile Richardot (mezzo-soprano), Edwin Crossley-Mercer (baritone), Marie-Laure Garnier (soprano), Anne de Fornel (piano) et al

La Boîte à Pépites BAP11 60:27 mins



Long dismissed as a trivial figure, Liza Lehmann had a phenomenal talent as a composer, singer and teacher. This thoughtfully curated collection reveals much more of Lehmann's artistry than we usually hear.

Lehmann likes her sentimentality, but she was not alone in this, among turn-of-the-century English composers. Listening to this album is like stepping into a Merchant Ivory film. What sets her apart is her gift for crafting singable, memorable melodies and piano parts that, while prioritising playability, are musically adventurous. These songs are immensely performable without being simplistic – singing teachers and amateurs should take note.

'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' is a standout example; 'Dusk in the Valley' opens with atmospheric grace, while 'By the Lake', composed in 1914, is a sublime discovery. Songs like 'How Sweet the Moonlight' prove more substantial than their titles suggest, while 'In the Watches of the Night' is simply lovely.

Some lighter pieces, like 'You and I' and 'Good Morning, Brother Sunshine' are borderline silly, but they are rare. The violin arrangement of the much-loved 'Ah Moon of My Delight' recalls flexible historic performance practices, and the duets add welcome variety.

Lehmann steers clear of virtuosity, focusing on lyricism, with occasional drama. In an era during which men dominated 'serious and demanding' music, Lehmann flourished in her distinctive field. The range of poetry she set offers a fascinating slice of English literary life. The excellent liner notes, characteristic of this label, are a great bonus.

Not every musical decision works, not all the singing is perfect, and clearer diction would help. But overall, the pioneering label La Boîte à Pépites has again dug out a gem. *Natasha Loges* ★★★★

Mozart

Selections from Le Nozze di Figaro, Così fan tutte etc

Anna Prohaska (soprano); Ensemble Resonanz/Riccardo Minasi
Harmonia Mundi HMM902704
69:08 mins

MOZART
HAFFNER-AKADEMIE
ANNA PROHASKA
ENSEMBLE RESONANZ
RICCARDO MINASI

The stated aim of this recording is to demonstrate that Mozart is not simply a graceful, Apollonian composer, but one who also reveals the dark, aggressive aspects of life.

The recording begins and ends with arias written for Nancy Storace. First we have Susanna's aria 'Deh vieni' (*Figaro*) which Anna Prohaska performs with consummate beauty as a simple serenade to Figaro, though as always when arias are taken out of context some of the underlying tension may inevitably go missing because Susanna (who is hidden) is being listened to by the countess, and perhaps even pretending to be her. The final track is 'Ch'io mi scordi di te?', a grand aria for Storace's farewell from Vienna. The voice performs a kind of duet with the piano implanted into the instrumental ensemble. Storace was essentially a comic actress so Mozart put the drama into the very active piano part, which in this recording slightly overwhelms the voice, Prohaska shows her truly impressive dramatic range in the central arias: in 'Come scoglio' (from *Cosi*) she gives us steely defiance and remarkable vocal dexterity; in 'Non più di fiori' (*Clemenza di Tito*) she displays her astonishing range (two and a half completely secure octaves); and in 'D'Oreste;' (*Idomeneo*) her voice abandons sweetness for the authenticity of breathless, uncertain anguish.
Anthony Pryer ★★★★

Schubert

Lieder etc

Carolyn Sampson (soprano), Joseph Middleton (piano), Michael Collins (clarinet)
BIS BIS-2703 75:41 mins

SCHUBERT'S FOUR SEASONS
CAROLYN SAMPSON · JOSEPH MIDDLETON

For their second *Schubertiade* Carolyn Sampson and Joseph Middleton survey the four seasons. While not exactly a theme that Schubert himself embraced in any detail, nor one which the accompanying liner notes pay much attention to, it produces an interesting recital with old friends alongside less familiar songs.

Sampson is much admired as a vocal stylist and the voice remains fresh and direct with a tonal clarity that is often only heard in an untrained artist. Her diction is exemplary, but sceptics may feel that there is 'sameness' in her approach to each song; while oddly for a singer who built her career on the Baroque repertoire, she employs minimal decoration. There is perhaps also a lack of drama in such lieder as *Heidenröslein* or *Frühlingsglaube*. Even the most strophic of Schubert's songs tell a story.

Middleton is a sturdy companion as spring moves through summer to winter, providing a whistling autumnal wind in *Herbst* and balmy spring breezes in *Frühlingsglaube*. Other pianists may dig deeper emotionally into this repertoire but there is much to be said for holding faith with what's written on page. This recording is most satisfying when Michael Collins joins Sampson and Middleton for *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen*. Collins's ripe clarinet echoes to winning dramatic effect up and down the valley as the shepherd calls his beloved.
Christopher Cook ★★★

C Wood

Songs for Voice and Piano

Carolyn Dobbin (mezzo-soprano), Roderick Williams (baritone), Iain Burnside (piano)
Delphian DCD34339-CD 71:05 mins

Charles Wood
songs for voice and piano

Putting aside unpleasant memories of singing Wood's well-known anthem 'O Thou, the Central Orb' as a boy chorister, I settled down to this album of 23 songs in hopeful anticipation of better times. And they quickly came. Over half of the items here draw on Irish poetry and Irish folk tunes, and Wood's musical responses, written during the 1890s and beyond, are regularly imaginative and sensitive, sometimes surprising too in their vocal lines and harmonic shifts. The piano accompaniments alone fall into no set pattern: witness the sudden complex contortions if a protagonist suffers emotional distress or, even worse, is drowned. Settings of Walt Whitman's poetry occasionally produce a straining for effect, though nothing dampens the forceful magnificence of 'Ethiopia Saluting the Colours', with its moving depiction of a slave woman in the Civil War saluting the American flag.

That song is one of Roderick Williams's portfolio, and he sings with all his usual commitment and expression, plus occasional wisps of an adopted Irish accent; something, perversely, that we never hear from the genuinely Irish Carolyn Dobbin, whose emotional responses are always agile but more quietly expressed. With both singers, I wished for less insistent vibrato. No alterations, however, are ever needed for Iain Burnside's always persuasive piano accompaniments.
Geoff Brown ★★★

Drama and dexterity: soprano Anna Prohaska explores Mozart's darker side

Lines of Life

Songs by Brahms, Schubert and György Kurtág

Benjamin Appl (baritone), György Kurtág, Pierre-Laurent Aimard, James Baillieu (piano)
Alpha Classics ALPHA1145 67:45 mins

α
LINES OF LIFE
SCHUBERT & KURTÁG

Benjamin Appl first worked on the *Hölderlin-Gesänge* with composer György Kurtág in 2018. It was, by Appl's account, both an exhausting and rewarding process, and this album is the fruit of that ongoing process, interspersed with Schubert lieder and seven world premieres of new works by Kurtág.

Appl's ever-expressive baritone is infinitely characterful here in these diverse settings. He is a thoughtful, revealing interpreter of Kurtág's verse, and his own admission that he finds one of the Hölderlin poems impenetrable is suitably disarming, not least when the composer himself counters that he had to write the music to find its meaning. The evocative Hölderlin settings are for lone singer, aside from 'Gestalt und Geist', into which Kurtág fires full throttle with trombone and tuba. These dark forays into love's loss and death are achingly evoked by Appl.

Pierre-Laurent Aimard joins him for the spiky Ulrike Schuster settings, from Appl's bitter 'Die Zeit', to the very relatable 'Ich Weiss Nicht…' abrupt, stark, tinged with frustration and a dark suggestion of universal truth. James Baillieu joins Appl for the Schubert songs, beautifully expressive, and of the three pianists, the last is – rather fittingly - Kurtág himself, ever sprightly on the keyboard.

He joins Appl for Schubert's 'Der Jüngling an der Quelle' and Brahms's 'Sonntag', the former filled with the gentle keyboard bubbling of the stream in Schubert's tender, wistful setting of lost love – very touching here – and a tribute to an endeavour which has clearly pleased both. The last 20 minutes comprises an interview, in German, between Appl and Kurtág, translated in the accompanying booklet.
Sarah Urwin Jones ★★★★★

BARBARA AUMULLER, MARCO BORGGREVE

Chamber

CHAMBER CHOICE

Johannes Brahms: Piano Quartets Nos. 2 & 3
Maria Nowak · Katarzyna Budnik · Yuya Okamoto
Krystian Zimerman

Radiant and whimsical Brahms Piano Quartets

Krystian Zimerman and friends deliver a superb performance for this new album, says *Jan Smaczny*

A fine balancing act: Krystian Zimerman and co master Brahms's light and shade

Brahms

Piano Quartet No. 3 in C minor; Piano Quartet No. 2 in A major
Krystian Zimerman (piano), Maria Nowak (violin), Katarzyna Budnik (viola), Yuya Okamoto (cello)
Deutsche Grammophon 486 4650 77:10 mins

Brahms's Second and Third piano quartets tend to be overshadowed by the First, not least in Schoenberg's snazzy orchestral arrangement, but in their way, these two works offer a much broader picture of the composer. Written in happy circumstances, the A major Quartet is one of Brahms's most open-hearted and immediately engaging chamber works. Zimerman and his colleagues deliver a superb performance capturing the outgoing qualities of the first movement, enjoying its expansiveness without losing sight of its tight underlying musical argument. They balance radiant lyricism and turbulent emotion in the slow movement with aplomb and bring just the right amount of whimsical humour to the *Scherzo*, while the *Finale* is full of verve without being too hectoring.

> There is a great deal to enjoy, in particular Yuya Okamoto's cello playing

Beginning life amid the storm and stress of Brahms's early infatuation with Clara Schumann, the C minor Quartet is the polar opposite of the earlier A major Quartet. The opening unison provides a brusque introduction to an argument which expands with relentless logic before melting into one of Brahms's loveliest second melodies. Zimerman and his team respond well to the tragic-heroic aspects of the movement, but don't quite offer enough balm in its gentler moments. There is a great deal to enjoy in the later movements, though, in particular Yuya Okamoto's cello playing at the start of the slow movement, and also the way in which the ensemble communicates the barely supressed desperation in the fiercely concentrated *Scherzo*. These performances, recorded in a pleasantly resonant acoustic, are highly recommendable.
★★★★★

You can access thousands of reviews from our extensive archive on the BBC Music Magazine website at **www.classical-music.com**

Bartók • Berio

Berio: Duetti for Two Violins;
Bartók: 44 Duos for Two Violins
Maria Milstein (violin),
Mathieu van Bellen (piano)
Channel Classics CCS47425
85:39 mins (2CD)

Bartók's *44 Duos for Two Violins* – almost all of them based on folk melodies – are a sort of equivalent for string players to his more ambitious *Mikrokosmos* for pianists: both consist of short pieces arranged in progressive order of technical difficulty. Bartók didn't envisage them being played in public in their published order, however, and he drew up several suggested shorter groupings of pieces for concert use.

The husband-and-wife team of Mathieu van Bellen and Maria Milstein play the complete collection in a sequence that allows for maximum contrast of mood and style, ranging from the cheerful 'Limping Dance' to the mournful 'Bride's Farewell'. (The latter bears the impressive single-word title in Hungarian of *Menyasszonyibúcsúztató*.) Milstein and Van Bellen may not always capture the music's full humour (the tiny 'Mosquito Dance', for instance, with the rapid buzzing of the muted violins punctuated by sustained *fortissimos* as the insect bites, is a touch staid), but they've obviously lived with the pieces all their lives, and it shows.

Luciano Berio's brilliantly inventive 34 *Duetti for Two Violins* form a complement to Bartók's pieces, and it's not by chance that they begin with a piece called 'Béla'. Again, there's an educational purpose behind the music, and some of the numbers, including that opening homage to Bartók, can be played by beginners. Each piece is a miniature portrait of a friend, family member or colleague (among the last group are familiar names such as Igor Stravinsky, Pierre Boulez and Bruno Maderna), and like Bartók's, they are written without any stylistic compromise, so that they can function as an introduction to contemporary music. Maria Milstein and Mathieu van Bellen's scintillating performances do them full justice.
Misha Donat ★★★★★

Handel

Sonatas for Violin and Basso Continuo

Quartetto Vanvitelli

Arcana A578 60:55 mins

Quartetto Vanvitelli's projects offer a rare combination: erudition, beauty and deeply original programming. This recording takes up historic printed collections of Handel violin sonatas, some of which were not in fact by Handel. Onto this music, Quartetto Vanvitelli graft their own preludes, cadenzas and bridges, arranged and improvised from music mostly by Handel, often from his opera *Giulio Cesare*. To mix works truly by Handel with music disguised as his, both from his day and our own, requires bravura and a deep knowledge of practice and repertoire, which the quartet amply possess and brilliantly marshal.

Violinist Gian Andrea Guerra fires the group's *esprit du corps*. The brilliance with which he spins an idea, the intensity he brings to an affect and the glorious ways he exploits his period instrument – for instance when he pivots from husky, fragile *pianissimo* to vibrant, full-bodied sustained notes – coalesce in arresting moments. As the accompanied soloist, Guerra is necessarily the leading presence, yet he yields constantly to his fellow players in a delicate dance between parts. The luminous *passage* with which archlutenist Mauro Pinciaroli drapes his continuo realisations become hushed solos that seem as if they have been improvised. In sonatas not by Handel, keyboardist Luigi Accardo takes advantage of the musical lines being more independent than in actual Handel sonatas, allowing his continuo realisations to bubble up from below and carry the melody. A dazzling duet crafted by cellist Nicola Brovelli rounds out this superb conjunction of scholarship and performing brio. *Berta Joncus*

★★★★★

Mozart

Piano Sonata No. 4*; Violin Sonata No. 25 etc

Julien Libeer (piano), Pierre Colombet (violin), Eckart Runge (cello) et al

Harmonia Mundi HMM902699

81:54 mins

Dazzling duos: violinists Mathieu van Bellen and Maria Milstein are on scintillating form

BARTEK BARCZYK, CARLOS VILLARROEL

These freshly minted accounts speak convincingly to what pianist Julien Libeer calls 'Mozart's unique motivating power' in his booklet article. He's partnered here by a trio of outstanding string players, members of the Ébène and Artemis Quartets, and of the Berlin Philharmonic respectively.

Their traversal of the G minor Piano Quartet, K478, offers stimulating perspectives on its lyricism, rather than its declamatory aspects alone, notably during the opening *Allegro*, which gains considerably from the more introspectively nuanced touch it receives here. The central *Andante* is tenderly realised, too, its winning eloquence recalling the legendary 1951 Clifford Curzon/Budapest Quartet recording (Music and Arts), while the concluding *Rondo* has both pace and rigour aplenty.

The B flat Trio, K502, one of three composed during the second part of 1788, is among Mozart's finest, and played here with impressive technical finesse and, in the *Larghetto*, a pleasing degree of understatement, too. This ad-hoc team might not displace long-established ensembles, such as the Beaux Arts (Decca) or Florestan (Hyperion) Trios, though their enticing musicality often affords greater listening pleasure than the big-boned muscularity of the Barenboims and cellist Kian Soltani on DG.

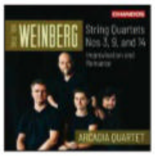
Mozart's F major Violin Sonata, K377, makes an unusual but apposite foil to the other works here. Julien Libeer and violinist Pierre Colombet give an uncommonly affecting performance and are heard to welcome advantage in the variations of the central *Andante* movement. Finally, there's Libeer's own thoughtfully charismatic playing of the E flat Piano Sonata, K282, a sterling account by any measure, to complete this enjoyable offering. Recommended. *Michael Jameson* ★★★★★

Weinberg

String Quartets Nos 3, 9 & 14 (Vol. 5)

Arcadia Quartet

Chandos CHAN 20328 81:32 mins



One of the great virtues of the Arcadia Quartet's outstandingly performed Weinberg quartet cycle lies is its imaginative programming. The present release is a good case in point, featuring works that were written over a period of 30 years in which the composer's musical language evolved into a much grittier and hard-hitting mode of expression.

To what extent this development was directly affected by Weinberg's problematic relationship with the Soviet regime remains an open question. Yet the repressive cultural environment that characterised the last years of Stalin's rule undoubtedly left a scar, prompting the composer to simplify his language, albeit temporarily. You can experience this simplification by comparing the rhythmically propulsive and emotionally restless 1944 Third Quartet with the heartfelt romantic melancholy of the *Improvisation and Romance* from 1950. However, I find the later work, which is stylistically closer to the musical language of Myaskovsky, the more convincing of the two.

No such qualms affect the other two compositions on this album. The Ninth, dating from the early 1960s, covers a wide range of moods and emotions and is delivered with compelling intensity and imagination. It opens with a highly charged *Allegro molto* projecting an almost obsessive density of sound which marks a sharp contrast to the ensuing ghostly *Allegretto* waltz whose frequent use of pizzicato and harmonics seems to cast a dark shadow over the rest of the work. Similarly unsettling episodes characterise the vividly performed Fourteenth Quartet of 1978. Conceived as an unbroken sequence of five sections, this work, which is dominated by long impassioned monologues for solo instruments, seems unable to achieve any kind of resolution between passages of violence and those of a more comforting nature. *Erik Levi*

★★★★★

Winterberg

Chamber Music, Vol. 2

Adele Bitter (cello), Holger Groschopp (piano), Clemens Linder (violin), Andre Schoch (trumpet) et al

EDA Records EDA53 70:10 mins

With a prolific composer that is as relatively little-known as Hans Winterberg, it's somewhat difficult to get a handle on exactly where to place him in the

BRIEF NOTES

Down to earth: Brother Tree Sound impress in Ravel

Noah Max String Quartets

Tippett Quartet et al *Toccata Classics TOCC0749 68:46 mins*

There is a feeling of self-assurance in this impressive set of works, composed 2020-23. The four quartets are brilliantly varied in style, with No. 1 'The Man Who Planted Trees' perhaps the most compelling; its narration by Michael Morpurgo could be more intimate, let down by a rather roomy 'live' sound. The Tippett Quartet are on fine form, as ever. *Michael Beek* ★★★★

Sondheim Songs (arr. for violin and piano etc)

Opus Two *Bridge Records BRIDGE9605. 50:36 mins*

Eric Stern here arranges songs from Sondheim's Broadway shows for violin and piano – joined occasionally by voice or cello. Despite some sensitive playing, perhaps more than any other theatre composer, Sondheim's words are as deeply affecting as his music – and shorn of the important text, these songs pack only half their punch. *Charlotte Smith* ★★★

An Eastern Trip

Works by Kodály, Prokofiev, Rózsa, Shchedrin

Dimitri Maslennikov (violin), Sabine Weyer (piano)

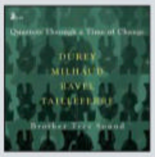
Quartz QTZ2166 65:62 mins

The 'trip' here is to two countries – Hungary, in the company of Rósza and Kodály, and the Soviet Union, courtesy of Prokofiev and Shchedrin (who also gives us a glimpse of Spain in his *In the style of Albéniz*). It is a largely enjoyable journey, with folky moments along the way, though Maslennikov and Weyer are surprisingly restrained in Prokofiev's emotionally charged Sonata, written during turbulent times in 1949. *Jeremy Pound* ★★★

Quartets Through a Time of Change

Works by Durey, Milhaud, Ravel, Tailleferre

Brother Tree Sound *FHR FHR174 68 mins*



Some may crave a little more polish and refinement, but I love Brother Tree Sound's earthy approach to Ravel's String Quartet here. After that, we have three quartets by members of Les Six group of composers written towards the end of World War I, all performed with a similarly unfettered passion and sense of forward momentum. It's not always pretty, but that, surely, is partly the point. *Jeremy Pound* ★★★★

context of 20th-century musical developments. Born in Prague into a German-speaking Jewish family, but as a result of political circumstances eventually settling in Bavaria, he seems to have absorbed a wide range of influences, some deriving from the Second Viennese School and Hindemith, others from Czech and even French masters.

This bridge between Western, Central and Eastern European musical elements results in an astonishing and unpredictable diversity of styles vividly reflected in this fascinating and adeptly performed collection of chamber works composed between 1936 and 1964. Perhaps surprisingly, some of the most advanced music features in *Dort und Hier*, a relatively early song cycle for soprano and piano trio setting poems by Franz Werfel whose daring harmonies and expressionist vocal lines seem closely aligned to the soundworld of Alban Berg. Conversely, 30 years later the *Sudeten-Suite*, a sequence of three picture-postcard movements depicting geographical landmarks in that particular region, presents nostalgically tonal music recreating a kind of salon style more commonly associated with lighter idioms that were fashionable before the First World War.

On initial acquaintance, however, three other works make a more powerful and immediate impact. I particularly liked the Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano from 1950, its atmospheric piano writing, coupled with a subtle blend of woodwind and string timbres, making it a significant addition to the limited repertoire for this particular combination. Similarly, the Suites for Violin and Piano and for Clarinet and Piano get straight to the heart of the matter with clearly defined but succinctly targeted short movements. *Erik Levi* ★★★★

An English Pastoral

Works by Bliss, Finzi, Gurney and Ian Venables

Chu-Yu Yang (violin);
Eric McElroy (piano)
SOMM Recordings SOMMCD 0700 75:45 mins

In collaboration with pianist-composer Eric McElroy, violinist Joe Chu-Yu Yang dives into the lush pastures of English pastoralism, harvesting not one but two anniversaries alongside a generous crop of premiere recordings. The album is bookended by 70th birthday tributes to Ian Venables and acknowledges the 50th anniversary of the death of Arthur Bliss with a robustly supple account of the Violin Sonata, composed during the First World War and standing on the cusp of a move into new compositional territory.

Ivor Gurney, Bliss's almost exact contemporary, supplies the lion's share of the premiere recordings with seven early pieces all written before the Royal College of Music and Charles Villiers Stanford beckoned. Presenting them unrelievedly back-to-back arguably does the teenage Gurney few favours though. Mostly introspective – if leavened with a playful *Humoreske* – they're certainly worth hearing; but 'In September' is a decidedly pensive take on the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, while 'In August' is hardly less troubled. The *Chanson Triste*, meanwhile, brokers an encounter between Elgar and Tchaikovsky with tantalising intimations of the fledgling Gurney himself.

Yang and McElroy are a consistently thoughtful duo with a rapport that is eminently attuned to the elusive and allusive territory they've chosen to map out. Happily, they leave little room for wallowing. The Finzi *Elegy* is unfolded with a weather eye on Finzi's scrupulous craftsmanship while the Venables Sonata (a reworking of the 1989 Flute Sonata) is similarly navigated with lucid lyricism. And in the *Pastorale* first movement of the *Three Pieces* composed three years earlier, Yang's warm, generously inviting tone is summoned by bells as the violin prepares to float an expansive melody that undulates as languidly as the Severn landscape that inspired it. *Paul Riley* ★★★

Fantasies

Works by Janáček, Tchaikovsky, Wagner et al

Zlatomir Fung (cello),
Richard Fu (piano)
Signum Classics SIGCD882 75:47 mins

Operatic fantasies for piano or violin are relatively plentiful, but it's taken Zlatomir Fung a bit of digging to find similar works for

Fantasy figures: cellist Zlatomir Fung reimagines operatic works with aplomb

MARCO BORGGREVE, ASTRUD DE DRUIN

cello, and the album starts with his own *Fantasy on Jenůfa*. It creeps in with ghostly pizzicatos but doesn't often display the virtuosity that you might expect in this genre: it's more interested in catching Janáček's quirky repetitive style, which it does with great success. Fung has a terrific sense of timing, and, when the heat is on, there is almost complete technical confidence in double stops, together with affection in the more romantic passages, and matching assurance from Fu.

We're on more conventional ground in the 19th century, with Servais's take on themes from Donizetti's *La Fille du Régiment* and Hainl's fantasy on themes from Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. Both use the familiar tropes of variation and decoration, with plenty of athletic arpeggios, harmonics, and an exploitation of the higher range of the instrument. Fung's tone is varied and secure, and he has a wide variety of attack and phrasing, from the tender to the aggressive, matching the changing moods of the music, coupled with a playful use of rubato.

Shorter, and both focused on a single aria, are Wilhelm's version of 'Walther's Prize Song' and Bukinik's of 'Lensky's Aria'. The Wagner shows Fung's mastery of the long lyrical line, and the Tchaikovsky, after a stern introduction, also sings out with heartfelt abandon. Estrin's *Fantasia Carmèn* was written for Fung, and apart from some irritatingly jarring spoken interjections, conforms broadly to the 19th century model, but with even more wide-ranging technical demands, some of which stretch Fung to the limit, and occasionally beyond. *Martin Cotton* ★★★★

Granada – *Spanish Music for Violin and Piano*

Works by De Falla, Granados, Montsalvatge, Nin, Rodrigo, Sarasate and Turina

Elsa Grether (violin),
Ferenc Vizi (piano)

Aparté AP381 73 mins

This imaginative tour through the music of Spain from violinist Elsa Grether and pianist Ferenc Vizi is a treat indeed. Sparked by an interest in her Spanish grandfather whom she never knew, Grether set about programming a recital album of Spanish music that weaves together the 'hits and rarities' of the territory by including such crowdpleasing favourites as Sarasate's *Carmen Fantasy*, and also showcasing perhaps lesser-known talents such as the part-Cuban, part-Catalan composer Joaquín Nin. The result is utterly charming and features first-rate performances from Grether and Vizi throughout.

Joaquín Rodrigo is of course most famous for his *Concierto de Aranjuez* for guitar and orchestra, but it is a pleasure to delve deeper into his catalogue here. Premiered in 1966, Rodrigo's 'sparkling' *Sonata pimpante* for violin and piano was written for the composer's virtuoso violinist son-in-law. The duo gives a spirited and accomplished account of this tricky work, negotiating the fizzing technical challenges of the outer movements with aplomb, while offering a nuanced and emotive reading of the slow movement.

Other highlights include Manuel de Falla's beguilingly beautiful *Suite populaire espagnole* which draws on the idioms of Spanish folk song, and a bravura performance of the *Carmen Fantasy*. The album cleverly closes on a gentler note with Montsalvatge's lilting *Lullaby*. Originally a vocal setting of a poem by Uruguayan poet and champion of Afro-Uruguayan culture, Pereda Valdès, this delicate arrangement from 1957 offers a deft and reflective close to the album.

Completed by perceptive sleeve notes written by François-Xavier Szymczak, this is altogether a commendable release: subtle, thoughtful, exuberant.
Kate Wakeling ★★★★

River of Fire

Stacy Garrop: Romani Songs*; **Sergio Assad:** Contos Ciganos**; **Atanas Ourkouzounov:** Raga Ibriama; **Matthew Dunne:** Three Artisans; **Clarice Assad:** Four Scenes^

Cavatina Duo; *Brandon Vamos (cello); **Simin Ganatra (violin); ^Pacifica Quartet

Cédille CDR90000235 79:50 mins

Composers have long turned to folk traditions to create the backbones of their works, with folk textures and motifs punctuating many of the greatest works in our classical canon. The Chicago-based Cavatina Duo (flautist Eugenia Moliner and guitarist Denis Azabagić) takes us into these worlds again, but specifically with works inspired by Romani traditions.

Although none of the featured composers are from a Romani background (which is perhaps a missed opportunity?), their works reflect the stylings and anthems of the diaspora through diverse cultural lenses. Atanas Ourkouzounov's *Raga Ibriama* sets Romani sounds against the rhythms of Bulgarian folk music within the form of an Indian raga, while Matthew Dunne's *Three Artisans* blends jazz, flamenco and Romani influences.

The programme is punchy and continuously engaging, with moments of celebration and exploration and themes of displacement and resilience examined within the writing. Clarice Assad's closing work, *Four Scenes*, paints a dynamic portrait of the Romani experience of being in constant motion, with melodic lines dancing over one another. Occasionally, the melodic lines intersect, but greater cohesion between players would have strengthened these moments. A more equal recording set-up between the instruments and a more unified tone might have aided this.

The Cavatina Duo bring us the roughness of playing that this style of music demands, particularly in Stacey Garrop's opening *Romani Songs*. At times, a greater variation in the flute's heavy, woody timbre could have added more contrast and nuance to the overall sound.
Freya Parr ★★★

Instrumental

INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE

CHANDOS
RAVEL
COMPLETE WORKS FOR SOLO PIANO
JEAN-EFFLAM BAVOUZET

Bavouzet conjures characterful Ravel

Rebecca Franks enjoys the pianist's latest take on the complete solo works

Ravel

Complete Works for Solo Piano
Jean-Efflam Bavouzet (piano)
Chandos CHAN 20287(2)
143 mins (2CD)

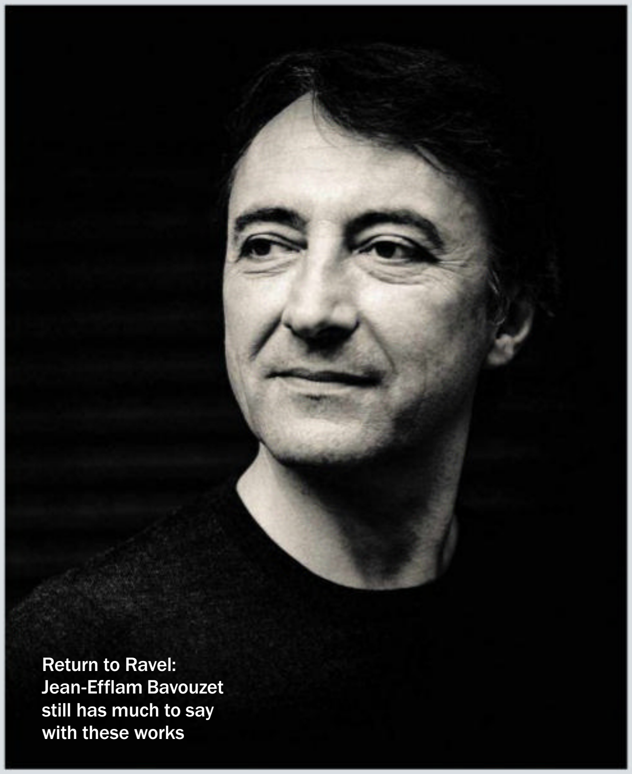
Latest out of the traps for Ravel's 150th anniversary is Jean-Efflam Bavouzet. Do we need another set of the complete piano works, I hear you ask? It's true that any Ravel fan can easily find a great recording of them already, including by Bavouzet himself, back in 2003 for MDG. But there are sure to be plenty of fans queuing up to listen to the French pianist's latest thoughts on the composer, crisply recorded and excellently produced by Chandos.

> The *Valses nobles et sentimentales* dance with an easy grace

Bavouzet brings his usual élan, so familiar from his complete recordings of Debussy, Haydn et al, to a programme that takes us from Ravel's earliest surviving piano work (the spiky *Sérénade grotesque*, not the most obvious album opener) right through to a vigorous performance of *La valse*. In between, Bavouzet draws our attention over and over to the brilliance of Ravel's writing and the way he returned to certain ideas over the years, casting them in new light.

Water glistens in a sparkling, fluid *Jeux d'eau*, for instance; later, in 'Une barque sur l'océan', Bavouzet captures the surge and swell of the sea with convincing power. Bells are another theme. We hear them in the layers of sound in 'La vallée des cloches' created by Bavouzet's judicious pedalling and tonal variety, which ranges from steely brightness to deep warmth. In 'Le Gibet', the bell becomes an insistent reminder of death – and Bavouzet immerses us fully in its heavy mood.

And, beyond the virtuosity we can take for granted, that's Bavouzet's trump card: his playing is so full of vivid character, whether conjuring impressionistic pictures or drawing out abstract musical qualities. Here, *Le tombeau de Couperin* comes up fresh, while the *Valses nobles et sentimentales* dance with an easy grace. ★★★★★



Return to Ravel: Jean-Efflam Bavouzet still has much to say with these works

BEN EALOVEGA

You can access thousands of reviews from our extensive archive on the BBC Music Magazine website at **www.classical-music.com**

Bartók

Three Studies for Piano; Sonatina; Allegro barbaro; Four Piano Pieces; Marche funèbre; Piano Sonata
Sonya Bach (piano)
Rubicon RCD1194 60:40 mins

BARTÓK
SONYA BACH

The substantial 'Study for the Left Hand' that opens Béla Bartók's *Four Piano Pieces* seems out to trick us into thinking it is by Richard Strauss. It sounds almost like an extraordinary pastiche of the German composer's language (and it's almost equally amazing that such an opulent opus can be played by only one hand). But Sonya Bach's excellently chosen Bartók selection demonstrates the composer's stylistic evolution without resorting to anything as spoon-fed as chronological order. Instead, she turns back the clock in the middle of the programme, delivering quite a satisfying stylistic jolt in the process. Though separated by just 15 years, the *Four Piano Pieces* and the *Three Studies* that begin the album occupy different worlds: the latter, from 1918, seems virtually prescient of György Ligeti.

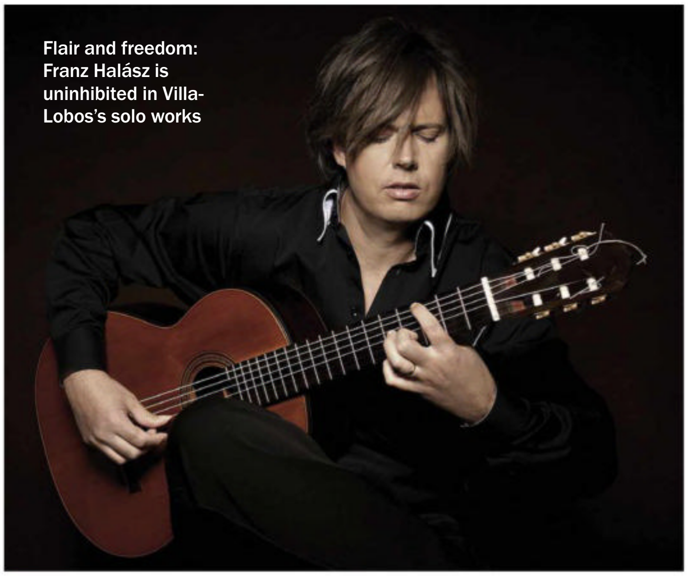
Navigating through this vivid, varied and virtuosic repertoire with great assurance, Bach achieves a superb balance between fiery abstract qualities, the driving rhythms of Hungarian folk music and a deep vein of lyricism, delivered with beautiful, rich *legato*. There's an unshakeable, deep-set core to her sound that places everything exactly where it needs to be and, happily, with never a hint of 'banging'. Her up-tempo *Allegro barbaro* is more *allegro* than barbaric; she draws out the irresistibly folksy qualities of the *Sonatina*, the moodiness of the funeral march from the tone poem *Kossuth*, and the full-blooded all-you-can-eat textures of the Piano Sonata, Sz 80. The recorded sound has warmth and well-judged resonance *ma non troppo*, contributing to a rewarding, enjoyable listen.
Jessica Duchen ★★★★

Chopin

The Complete Waltzes
Stephen Hough (piano)
Hyperion CDA68479 (Reissue) 61:13 mins

CHOPIN
Waltzes

This re-release of Stephen Hough's 2011 Chopin album once again puts the spotlight on the *Waltzes*, a body of the composer's work that in recent decades has fallen out of favour (relatively speaking) with audiences and pianists alike, at least when compared with such genres as the *Mazurkas* and *Polonaises*. In contrast to those national dance forms of spiritual significance, the *Waltzes* have tended to suffer



Flair and freedom: Franz Halász is uninhibited in Villa-Lobos's solo works

from perceptions of pathos and sentimentality, yet in the hands of Hough there is little danger of such misrepresentation. If his light-footed, elegant opening with Op. 18 teeters towards skittishness, such a feeling is quickly dispelled: there's light and shade in the first of the three Op. 34 pieces, and heart-stopping pensiveness in the second. The whirling textures of Op. 42 have a certain shyness, evoking (in the words of the musicologist Jim Samson) 'not the glitter of the ballroom but the intimacy of its shadowy corners'.

Hough's clearly organised survey moves from the eight published Waltzes through the unpublished works and even those of doubtful attribution. In lesser hands, a falling off in musical quality might have been a problem, but Hough finds the essence of all these pieces. He brings sincere charm to the Waltz in B minor and turns the late Waltz in A minor into a miniature masterpiece. Hough makes a case for including the waltz-echoing Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2 here before adding a persuasive account of the Waltz in A minor recently discovered in New York – a newly recorded addition to the original album programme. As was the case back in 2011, this is pianism of a high order.

John Allison ★★★★★

Villa-Lobos

Douze Études; Cinq Préludes; Suite populaire brésilienne and other works for solo guitar

Franz Halász (guitar)

BIS BIS-2735 83:23 mins

FRANZ HALÁSZ
GUITAR
THE COMPLETE SOLO WORKS
VILLA-LOBOS

This album performed by Franz Halász explores the complete guitar works of Heitor Villa-Lobos. The Brazilian composer sums up for many the 'classical' sound of his country, using folk tunes as a basis combined with the unique and rather lovely idiosyncrasies of the classical guitar.

Halász has absolutely no inhibitions with his interpretation of the repertoire and at times flies through the pieces, displaying phenomenal chops and apparently effortless technical ability. His distinctive performances explore a zingy, lemony tone with an enduring freshness. He isn't particularly interested in precise rhythms – indeed seems to enjoy flinging the phrasing and tempos around with a cautionless freedom. This is amply demonstrated in *Douze Études*, where the flashier approach in some movements is breathlessly exhilarating. He does however manage to capture some of the playfulness and character in *Suite populaire brésilienne*, which is calmer and sunnier. *Mazurka-Chôro* and *Schottisch-Chôro* are charming and Halász clearly hasn't forgotten the folk roots of these tunes ('choro' referring to a Brazilian genre of popular music). He also manages to convey a breadth of sound which only a musician completely at one with his instrument emanates; from the serenading qualities in Valsa Concerto No. 2 to the metallic timbres in *Lent-Anime-Lent* in the

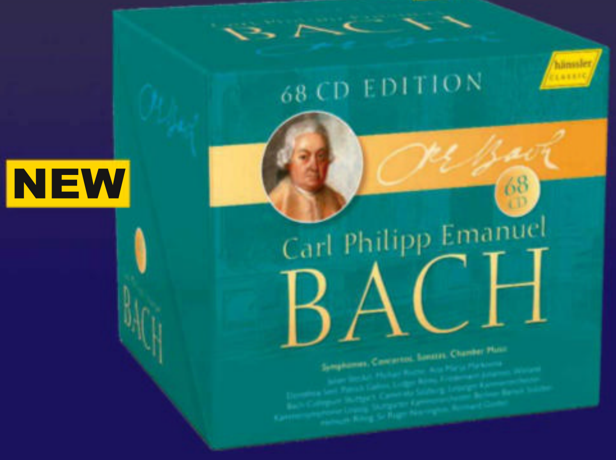
hänssler CLASSIC

JOSEPH HAYDN
Complete Symphonies

Thomas Fey
Johannes Klumpp
hänssler CLASSIC
HAYDN
36 CDs
COMPLETE SYMPHONIES
Heidelberger Sinfoniker · Thomas Fey · Johannes Klumpp
NEW

"This is the new reference recording for Haydn's complete symphonic oeuvre."
Audio / Stereoplay
"A paragon of dynamism, freshness and wildness, humor and a wealth of surprises! The complete recording of the symphonies allows a view of Haydn's development over the decades, presents his originality and, above all, many almost unperformed compositions of his early works."
Johannes Klumpp
Joseph Haydn 107 Symphonies 36 CDs HC24042

CARL PHILIPP EMANUEL BACH
revised and supplemented version



Julian Steckel, Michael Rische, Ana-Marija Markovina, Dorothea Seel,
Patrick Gallois, Ludger Rémy, Friedemann Johannes Wieland
Bach-Collegium Stuttgart, Camerata Salzburg, Leipziger Kammerorchester
Kammersymphonie Leipzig, Stuttgarter Kammerorchester, Berliner Barock Solisten
Helmuth Rilling, Sir Roger Norrington, Reinhard Goebel a. m. m.
68 CDs HC24045

CD – DOWNLOAD – STREAM
www.haensslerprofil.de · Haenssler Alliance Distribution

Douze Études. All of this is honestly presented in the recording; there is even a faint whoop of joy in the background at the end of the third track – which is thoroughly deserved; this is an impressive collection. *Anne Templer* ★★★★

Ancient Modernity

Works by Liza Lim, Ailie Robertson, Caroline Shaw, Errollyn Wallen et al

Louise McMonagle (cello)

Delphian DCD34320-CD 66:17 mins

ANCIENT MODERNITY
LOUISE McMONAGLE
DELPHIAN

Technique on the cello has evolved, moving more into the sphere of semi-pitched timbre in some cases. On this album quite a few pieces explore this pathway. As *Meteorology* by Liza Lim uses two bows on open strings, it invites the artist to explore bow speeds and pressures to vary the timbre. *Minerva* by Lisa Streich takes bowing action to effect diverse sounds – sometimes ugly sometimes ethereal – ranging from scraping to *col legno*. *Skydance* also delves into specific soundworlds, Ailie Robertson utilising harmonics to reflect the darting movements of the hen harrier.

New and old shake hands in *Single Form (Sarabande)* by Alex Groves. The omnipotent influence of Bach's *Sarabandes* from the *Cello Suites* breezes into the invention, but in masked format. A similar strand of homage to earlier music – in this case Thomas Tallis- infuses Caroline Shaw's *In manus tuas*. Once again, timbral exploration is the headline, with grating bows sliding into pitch and back into white noise.

Other items also refer to traditional melodies such as Zoë Martlew's *Salat Babilya*, which transfers the Oud's style of invention to the cello, utilising only *pizzicato*. It's a very moving and beautiful Arabic lullaby. Likewise, Corrina Hewat's catchy *My Love Dodging Rizla* is firmly in the pitched Scottish folk idiom.

The diversity of compositional style here is impressive, but it's often a challenging listen, in terms of gritty effects – possibly mainly of interest for cellists. Having said that, many pieces are more persuasive on repeated airings, and Scottish cellist, Louise McMonagle, proves a formidable and expressive interpreter, bringing both fervour and commitment, alongside a strong range of expression to the compositions. *Jo Talbot* ★★★

Take Me to the Water

Works by Coleridge-Taylor et al

Ashley Jackson (harp)

Decca 758 3640 42 mins

'Water was almost a codeword for freedom,' Ashley Jackson explains. 'The enslaved couldn't explicitly express their desires to be free, so water – or "River Jordan" – was used as a reference for the means of their escape.' Here, on her label debut, Jackson expands this idea to look at different interpretations of water across cultures, sometimes appearing as a metaphor for love or rebirth.

The harp is an almost note-perfect evocation of a cascading waterfall, so it seems a natural fit. But in other pieces – her own composition, *River Jordan*, for instance – the harp is used like a plucked guitar, with a much more improvisatory feel. Jackson layers her own humming over the percussive thwack on the harp.

Jackson's doctorate research was on Margaret Bonds's collaboration with the poet and social activist Langston Hughes, so it's no surprise that an arrangement of Bonds's spiritual 'Troubled Water' is also featured here, offering a melancholic counterbalance to some of the brighter, more hopeful spirituals. In works such as Alice Coltrane's song 'Radhye Shyam', Jackson is joined by the Harlem Chamber Players, who provide a rich bassline that showcases the lightness of the solo instrument's flowing water-like flourishes.

Debussy's *Danse sacrée et danse profane* shows another side of Jackson's playing capabilities, and leads surprisingly perfectly into Rezende's Latin-infused *Yamaya I*. On the closing title track, Jackson employs the vocals of a gospel choir to bring us back to the transportive nature of water and its role in the music of spirituals. *Freya Parr* ★★★

Ukraine – *A Piano Portrait*

Works by Bortkiewicz, Barvinsky, Lysenko, Kosenko, Valentin Silvestrov et al

Margaret Fingerhut (piano)

SOMM SOMMCD 0701 77:35 mins

SOMM
UKRAINE
A PIANO PORTRAIT
MARGARET FINGERHUT

International awareness of Ukrainian culture has been growing since the country was invaded by Russia, but not as much as might have been hoped – and not as much as Ukraine's rich artistic scene deserves. Though music lovers would still be hard pressed to name many Ukrainian composers, one figure thankfully more familiar than before is Mykola Lysenko, the earliest of the seven composers featured here and the true founder of a regional style. His *Rhapsody on Ukrainian Themes No. 2*, 'Dumka Shumka', has been picked up by several pianists, and rightly so: it's a wonderful piece that conjures up the sound of a cimbalom, and Margaret Fingerhut plays it with a sense of flowing fantasy and expansiveness.

Paying tribute on this album to her Jewish Ukrainian grandfather, Fingerhut showcases music written between 1877 and 2005, a tumultuous period in Ukrainian history. But most of the pieces featured inhabit a soundworld not far removed from Rachmaninov or Scriabin, especially and attractively so in the case of Levko Revutsky, and it is doubtless ungrateful to have wished for a little more contrast. Sergei Bortkiewicz frames the whole programme, with *Les Rochers d'Outche-Coche* a solemn evocation of a Crimean landscape.

The impressionistic early pieces of Vasyl Barvinsky – later persecuted under Stalin – receive imaginative performances, but the most haunting work is the *Nocturne-Fantasy* of Viktor Kosenko, who died in the *Holodomor*. More rhythmically driven, Boris Lyatoshinsky – censured as part of Moscow's 1948 crackdown on composers – is played with attack. Now in his late 80s, Valentin Silvestrov is heard here in neo-classical mode; Fingerhut responds with a delicacy that clears the air. *John Allison* ★★★★

BRIEF NOTES

Respighi **Piano Works**

Pietro Beltrani (piano) ***Da Vinci Classics C00995 58:37 mins***

At the heart of this enjoyable album are the *Three Preludes on Gregorian Melodies*, which Respighi would later orchestrate and expand for his piece *Church Windows* – it's a fascinating exercise to compare the two works. Elsewhere, there's a Chopin-like lyricism and charm to works such as the *Six Pieces* and Sonata in F minor, all of which Pietro Beltrani navigates with an effortless grace. *Jeremy Pound* ★★★★

Abracadabra **Works by Dukas, Saint-Saëns, Stravinsky, John Williams, the Sherman Brothers et al**

Beatrice Berrut (piano) ***La Dolce Volta LDV136. 60:38 mins***

BEATRICE BERRUT
ABRACADABRA

From a sorcerer in training to a wizard in waiting, this selection is a real treat as Berrut conjures classics by Dukas and John Williams via Stravinsky, Saint-Saëns and the Sherman Bros. Aided by a gorgeously vivid recording, every note of Berrut's barnstorming performance is crystal clear. Quite the magic trick and hugely enjoyable. *Michael Beek* ★★★★★

Preludes

Works by JS Bach, Chopin, Górecki, Messiaen, Rachmaninov

Jan Lisiecki (piano) ***DG 486 6018 79 mins***

Jan Lisiecki
preludes

Juxtaposing Chopin's Op. 28 set with individual preludes by Bach, Messiaen, Rachmaninov and Górecki, Lisiecki rises wonderfully to the challenges of each. In his Bach, each note is perfectly delineated, while he plays Chopin with cushioned fingers and beautiful rubato. His Górecki is flexible and muscular, never challenged by the considerable technical demands. *Charlotte Smith* ★★★★

130 years of adventure

Since 1896, we've taken curious travellers beyond the horizon to discover the most remote regions of our world. Celebrate with us and enjoy complimentary suite upgrades and exclusive prices.

Change the way you see the world.

130TH ANNIVERSARY OFFERS

FREE SUITE UPGRADE & EXCLUSIVE PRICES*

Greenland

Scan the QR code to learn more

Call **0203 553 1608** or visit **travelhx.com**

HX HURTIGRUTEN EXPEDITIONS

ANTARCTICA | ALASKA | GALÁPAGOS | GREENLAND | ICELAND
NORTHWEST PASSAGE | NORWAY | SVALBARD

CRUISE COLLECTIVE

Join Cruise Collective for free and receive an **additional 5% OFF** your next HX adventure!

cruise-collective.com

Terms and conditions: *Applies to new bookings made from 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025 (inclusive). Suite Upgrade Promotion is capacity controlled for selected HX departures from 24 October 2025 to 31 March 2027(inclusive). Departures may be removed at any time. Suite Upgrade Promotion is subject to suite availability at the time of booking. Availability must exist in following suite categories – ME (MS Roald Amundsen & MS Fridtjof Nansen) and Q2 (MS Fram). Promotion not applicable to any other suite category (i.e. MG on MS Fram and MF, MD, MC, MB and MA on MS Roald Amundsen & MS Fridtjof Nansen). Exclusive Pricing is for selected HX departures from 1 May 2025 – 31 March 2027 (inclusive). Bookings outside of these periods do not qualify. Offer is subject to availability and may be withdrawn at any time without prior notice. Single supplements may apply and applies to all offer occupancies. Cruise Collective member discount applies to new bookings only and is only applicable on voyage element. Discount available for direct guests only and cannot be booked via a travel agent. Images: © Jason Charles Hill/Karsten Bidstrup.

12642 ATOL PROTECTED

ABTA
Travel with confidence
ABTA No.Y6835

Screen

Michael Beek highlights some recent releases of music from film and television

SCREEN CHOICE

Shore scores to the fore

This Parisian tribute to the big-screen career of composer Howard Shore is a visceral delight

Dark beauty: *The Fly* (1986) remains one of Howard Shore's greatest film scores

GETTY

HOWARD SHORE
ANTHOLOGY
THE PARIS CONCERTS

Howard Shore

Anthology – The Paris Concerts (Suites and themes from film scores)
Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France/ Ludwig Wicki; Le Balcon et al
DG 486 6234 126 mins (2CD)

If there's any kind of homogenous quality to the music of Howard Shore, it's in his ability to marry atmospheric darkness with great beauty. The Canadian composer's career is as varied as they come, and this collection – recorded across three concerts in Paris – is a deep dive into some of Shore's greatest works for the screen. There's a thrilling immediacy to the performances, with conductor Ludwig Wicki no stranger to the repertoire having toured Shore's music for *The Lord of the Rings* regularly over the last 18 years. The album is dominated by a lengthy suite from *The Fellowship of the Ring* and opens with a gorgeous new arrangement of music from *The Hobbit* for oboe and orchestra. Shore's music for Middle-earth might be some of his most familiar, but it's his scores for David Cronenberg's *The Fly, Naked Lunch, Eastern Promises* and *Crash* that are some of his most distinctive. Each celluloid canvas clearly ignited Shore's imagination, and from the downright operatic nature of *The Fly* to *Crash*'s inventive use of chamber orchestra, metal percussion and several guitars, it's viscerally realised. This is a fitting tribute to a truly unique composer. ★★★★★

June round-up

THE BRUTALIST

If you've seen ***The Brutalist***, you'll remember just how big an impact ***Daniel Blumberg***'s music makes on the film. There's a brazen quality to the scoring, Blumberg's music standing out in hard relief, brutally if you will. I was in no doubt the British composer would take home awards for his efforts, and his BAFTA and Oscar wins for the score are testament to its originality and his innovative approach. Improvised music, jazz-infused sections recorded on set, prepared piano performed by John Tilbury and blasts of trumpet from Axel Dörner are the foundation of one of the most inventive film scores in years. On album it's just as arresting. *(Milan G010005380719E)* ★★★★★

The Reivers
JOHN WILLIAMS

Talking of standout early career turns, how about ***John Williams***'s ***The Reivers***? It's often regarded as the legendary composer's first 'major' film score, but whatever the case it does represent a turning point. He dispensed with the name 'Johnny' for this film, produced by and starring Steve McQueen, which he distilled with a nostalgic Americana style that would become something of a calling card. The fact it inspired a young Steven Spielberg to seek out the composer to write music for his films is reason enough to celebrate it, but its rambunctious colour and wistful charm have never sounded better. This complete presentation, lovingly remastered, is the release this important score deserves. *(La La Land Records LLLCD 1659)* ★★★★★

STAND BY FOR ACTION! 2

There's plenty of charm and nostalgia on ***Standby for Action! 2: Tunes of Danger***, a generous concert performance of music from the small-screen adventures of the late, great Gerry Anderson. His miniature 'Supermarionation' epics, like *Thunderbirds, Stingray, Joe 90* and *Captain Scarlet* are fondly remembered by viewers of a certain age, and their music by Barry Gray remains some of the best written for TV. This selection is set before and beyond those familiar classics, with themes from the likes of *Supercar, Terrahawks* (Richard Harvey) and *Space Precinct* (Crispin Merrell) added into the mix. It's a total joy on album, with the audience's enthusiasm palpable. The energetic performances by the specially assembled Hackenbacker Orchestra are spot on, too. *(Silva Screen SILCD1793)* ★★★★★

HOLLYWOOD GALA

You can always rely on the ***Danish National Symphony Orchestra*** to put on a good show, and they do just that with their sequel concert ***Hollywood Gala: Award Night at the Symphony***. The Blu-ray release is the best way to experience the show, though it features unnecessary Danish history interludes presented by singer Caspar Phillipson – whose opening medley of movie songs is also on the verge of cringe. Songs aside, and there are more, the orchestral/choral performances conducted by Christian Schumann are really very good. A highlight is Dario Marianelli's goosebump-inducing 'Briony/Elegy for Dunkirk', (from *Atonement*) featuring typewriter and chorus, while the suite from Max Steiner's *Casablanca* is exquisite. *(Euro Arts 2047914)* ★★★★

ONCE WITHIN A TIME

Philip Glass has reteamed with visionary director Godfrey Reggio (the *Qatsi* trilogy etc) for ***Once Within a Time***. It's a typically poetic, frenetic and rather dystopian filmed 'dream' about the end of all things. Vocalist Sussan Deyhim performs her own compositions in the score, which sees Glass creating something as brilliantly feverish and occasionally mind-boggling as you'd expect. *(Orange Mountain Music OMM0170)* ★★★

Books

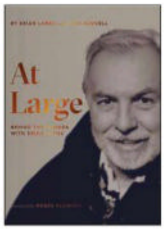
Our critics cast their eyes over the latest selection of books on all things music

At Large – Behind the Camera with Brian Large

Brian Large and Jane Scovell

VFMK 512pp (hb) £38.95

Brian Large took us to the opera in places we might never have visited. A master video director, he recorded the centenary *Ring* at Bayreuth, directed the all-in-a-day *Tosca* in its three Roman locations, and squeezed The Three Tenors onto the small screen.



While there is little here about how Large developed his elegantly fluid visual style or coaxed singers into scaling down their stage performances, other than the sound advice to 'look for the light', there is a feast of gossip.

Jessye Norman stamps her foot in Austria, Birgit Nilsson is overlooked and overheard behind the set for *Tristan* swigging a beer and breaking wind. Luciano Pavarotti is loved for all his vainglory while Herbert von Karajan seems several *pfennigs* short of a *Reichsmark* in what appears to have been a job interview.

Large reveals little about his inner self, but much about the glory days of opera in the final decades of the last century. And historians will value his hitherto unrevealed memories of Benjamin Britten. *Christopher Cook* ★★★★

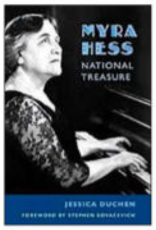
Myra Hess – National Treasure

Jessica Duchen

Khan & Averill 380pp (hb) £40

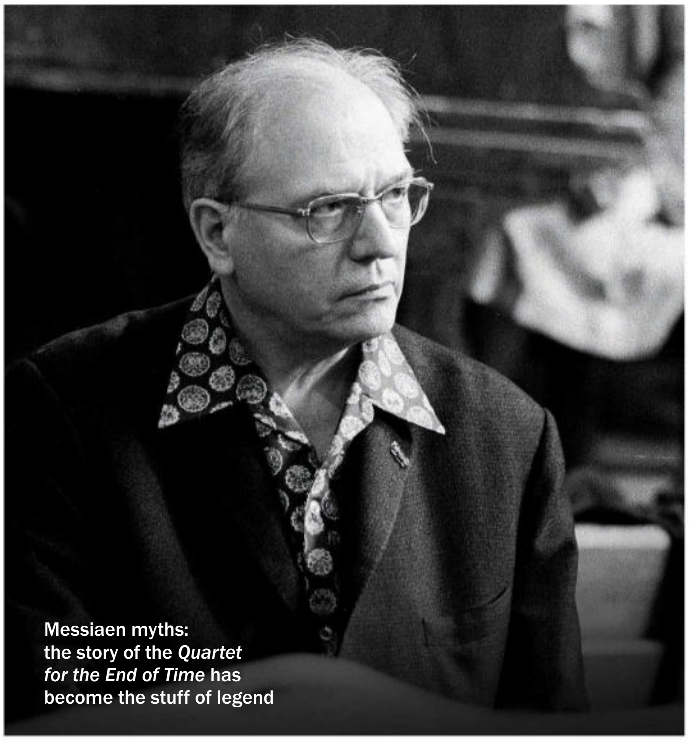
While the bombs fell on London, in one corner, the music played on. During the Second World War, Dame Myra Hess set up the spirit-raising National Gallery concerts, which ran for six-and-a-half years, clocking up 1,698 performances and convincing people of, in her words, 'the healing power of music'. An undisputed national treasure, but there's more to Myra, as Duchen's lovingly written, thoroughly researched new biography reveals.

Yes, we meet the serious-minded musician, who revered Beethoven, transcribed Bach's 'Jesu, joy of man's desiring' and dedicated her entire life to her career, rejecting marriage and keeping her love life, such as it was, almost entirely private.



But Duchen also shows us Hess's bawdy sense of humour, her personal grudges (the pianist Harriet Cohen, who had a long-running affair with Arnold Bax, gets short shrift) and her love of 'smoking and all-night parties'. One of her party tricks was playing Chopin's 'Black Keys' *Étude* with an orange.

We also discover how Hess became (and played like) the 'Queen Mother' in England yet found her artistic freedom in the US. It makes for a rich portrait of a wonderful pianist. *Rebecca Franks* ★★★★



Messiaen myths: the story of the *Quartet for the End of Time* has become the stuff of legend

GETTY

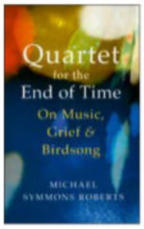
Quartet for the End of Time – On Music, Grief and Birdsong

Michael Symmons Roberts

Vintage 277pp (hb) £20

The poet Michael Symmons Roberts first encountered Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* as a student in a record shop and was at once gripped by its strange, kaleidoscopic beauty: 'I couldn't stop playing it.'

In this remarkable book, Symmons Roberts explores his complex ongoing relationship with Messiaen's visionary work, alongside reflections on grief, faith and the creative process. The book also offers a clear-sighted 'rebalancing' of the quartet's origin myth, noting how its 1941 'ice-clenched' washroom performance in a Silesian prisoner-of-war camp has 'become more famous than the music itself'. Drawing on Rebecca Rischin's 'forensic retelling' of the work's genesis, the book tells us how, for instance, a quantity of the quartet was actually composed before Messiaen entered the camp, while the premiere's cellist actually performed it on a newly purchased instrument, not the battered three-stringed cello that is commonly reported on.



An account free of sentimentality is always the more powerful for it, and this principle applies throughout the book. Symmons Roberts writes with wit, beauty and piercing insight, be it describing the work of 17th-century mystic Jakob Böhme or recounting the scattering of his parent's ashes over Coniston Water. In responding to Messiaen's radiant masterpiece, Symmons Roberts has created a masterpiece of his own. *Kate Wakeling* ★★★★★

Sing for your Supper

Ian Bloomfield

Troubador 368pp (pb) £10.99

Singer Ian Bloomfield has been many things, appearing in opera, operetta and musicals, but for the last half of his career either busking or singing as a member (later manager) of various vocal formations in which he has been a singing waiter.

Music was in him from the start. With family support he studied horn at London's Trinity College of Music (now Trinity Laban). When that didn't work out, he turned to his voice, which gradually rose in pitch to tenor.

SING FOR YOUR SUPPER!
IAN BLOOMFIELD

In opera he enjoyed a lengthy stint in the ENO Chorus, followed by the realisation that he was unlikely to rise higher in the formal operatic profession.

Nothing daunted, he turned to busking and later to the phenomenon of the singing waiter, endlessly singing such arias as 'La donna è mobile' or 'Nessun dorma' to umpteen audiences at weddings, the odd funeral, conventions and indeed all manner of venues up and down the land, eventually reaching such ritzy gigs as Venice, Saint-Tropez and Davos.

He's clearly had a generally good time and retails his unusual calling with boundless good humour. *George Hall* ★★★★

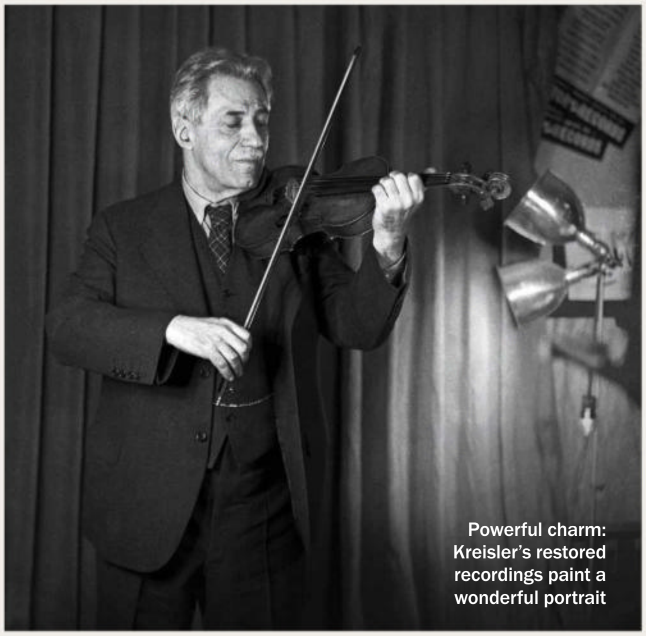
From the archives

Andrew McGregor looks over this month's reissued and live archive recordings

ARCHIVE CHOICE

Kreisler across the ages

Thirty years of the great violinist's concerto recordings make for a truly fascinating tribute


Powerful charm: Kreisler's restored recordings paint a wonderful portrait

Kreisler plays Violin Concertos

Works by JS Bach, Brahms, Kreisler, Lalo, Mozart, Tchaikovsky et al
Fritz Kreisler (violin); The Philadelphia Orchestra et al
Pristine Audio PASC737 207:33 (3CD)

Have you missed one of the major musical anniversaries of 2025? Viennese violinist Fritz Kreisler, born 150 years ago, a major recording artist in the acoustic and electrical ages. Historic remastering experts Pristine Classical celebrate with Kreisler's complete recorded concerto repertoire, and where there are repeats, they've gone for the earlier ones from the 1920s, confident that Mark Obert-Thorn's restorations of Kreisler in his prime can compensate for the recording technology. We end up with a portrait of one of first 'modern' violinists, from the Bach Double with Efrem Zimbalist in 1915 – the first violin concerto recording ever made – to Kreisler's own Concerto in the style of Vivaldi in 1945, aged 70, his technique diminished but not the powerful charm of his playing. Old-fashioned Mozart from 1924, the Bruch Concerto from the test pressings Kreisler gave to Elgar, plus tantalising movements of Tchaikovsky and Lalo recorded with piano. We leap into the electric age with Beethoven and Mendelssohn in Berlin in 1926, and fiery Brahms a year later. Remarkably good sound, and a fitting tribute to one of the greats. ★★★★

June round-up

SOMM extends its celebration of Holst's 150th last year to bring us more historic performances, both with the ***BBC Symphony Orchestra and Malcolm Sargent***. From 1956 there's a stirring stereo account of ***Beni Mora***, remastered from HMV, and a mono BBC broadcast of the ***Choral Symphony*** live at the Royal Festival Hall in 1964, from eerily atmospheric opening to expansively ambitious Finale. Both still rarities on record, Holst fans shouldn't hesitate. *(SOMM ARIADNE 5040)* ★★★★

Anthony Rolfe Johnson singing ***Vaughan Williams***'s cycles ***The House of Life*** and ***Songs of Travel*** with David Willison in 1974 is a reissue of a reissue. Fans of the English tenor need no reminding of how sweetly lyrical and effortlessly communicative he was in those early days, beginning to stretch his wings in opera and on stage. If you prefer the heavier tread of baritones in the *Songs of Travel*, sample the poignant beauty of 'Youth and Love' – while the second disc of Gurney, Butterworth and Warlock songs is irresistible. *(Heritage HTGCD 128-29)* ★★★★

Hungarian-born violinist ***Jelly d'Arányi***'s reputation as a tempestuous virtuoso in Britain between the wars isn't born out by the cautious account of the Vitali *Chaconne* that opens her ***Complete Columbia Recordings 1928-31***. But the famously seductive tone and purity of style is present and correct, and while you won't find famous pieces written for her (Ravel's *Tzigane* or the Bartók Sonatas), the Gluck, Kreisler and Pergolesi miniatures are charming and well remastered. They've added the Mozart G major Concerto d'Arányi recorded for Vocalion in 1925, a scratchy document that reminds us how much performing styles have changed. *(Biddulph 85056-2)* ★★★

Dvořák's ***Symphony No. 7*** in concert from the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted in 1981 by Bernard Haitink. Would his name make you gravitate towards Dvořák? On this evidence it should: he unerringly identifies the Brahmsian breadth that underpins the symphony, and they play for Haitink with a commitment and romantic radiance that lifts Dvořák's lyrical inspiration off the page. Trust Haitink not to settle for ingratiating charm; he finds the shadows underpinning the *Adagio*, and the melancholy tint to the dancing *Scherzo*. Dvořák's *Scherzo Capriccioso* is less profound, but played with charm, wit and lightness of heart. An excellent German radio recording. *(BR Klassik 900223)* ★★★★★

These historic recordings of ***Carl Nielsen*** were a revelation when they were first released on LP in the early 1990s, especially for clarinettists. Nielsen heard the Copenhagen Wind Quintet rehearsing in 1921, and resolved to write a concerto for each member, but only managed the flute and clarinet concertos. The formidable Aage Oxenvad premiered the Clarinet Concerto, but died before he could record it, and it's obvious from contemporary descriptions that Nielsen was inspired by Oxenvad's tempestuous character as much as his pungent playing. Louis Cahuzac made this first recording in 1947, more refined than Oxenvad's exhilarating sound in the Quintet recording from 1936, or Nielsen's *Serenata*. Fascinating documents, in vivid remastered sound. *(Clarinet Classics CC0002)* ★★★★

Andrew McGregor is the presenter of Radio 3's *Record Review*, broadcast each Saturday afternoon from 2pm-4pm

Thrilling young talent: Michel Béroff wowed even as a teenager

GETTY

Unboxed

This month's round-up features one of the great US quartets, a piano virtuoso and double Doráti

With ***Michel Béroff – The Complete Erato Recordings*** *(Erato 2173241938)* comes an opportunity to enjoy a quarter of a century of great pianism. ***Béroff***, who celebrates his 75th birthday this year, shone in the works of Messiaen and other modernists even as a teenager and went on to set new benchmarks of their repertoire on studio albums for what was EMI Classics and later Erato. Messiaen fills five of this 42-disc collection, with a cracking 1977 *Turangalîla-Symphonie* with the LSO and a 1968 *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* just the tip of the iceberg. With many more discs here besides those, you quickly see just how prolific the French pianist was in the studio. From Bach and Brahms to Prokofiev and Debussy, it's a timeless selection.

A similarly generous release, ***Guarneri String Quartet – The Complete RCA Victor Album Collection*** *(Sony Classical 19658886002)* charts four decades of the US ensemble's work in the studio across 49 discs. Signing with RCA in the mid-1960s, it wasn't long before critics and audiences began to sit up and take notice, the Guarneris going on to become one of the great American string quartets. This remarkable collection takes the broadest possible view, with sessions captured from 1965-2005. Ten discs of Beethoven are its heart, but there is so much more to soak up here, from Haydn and Mozart to piano quintets by Robert Schumann, Brahms and Dvořák with regular piano partner Arthur Rubinstein.

The Eloquence label continues its must-listen survey of Hungarian conductor ***Antal Doráti*** with a pair of new releases. ***Antal Doráti in London, Vols 1 & 2*** *(Eloquence ELQ4847015 & ELQ4847106)* takes in scintillating readings and recordings of big-boned orchestral works for the stage and concert hall across a combined 57 discs. It's a huge amount of music and staggering to think it was all recorded over a single decade. Indeed, Doráti would record for two weeks straight at the end of the season, here with a range of ensembles, from the Minneapolis Symphony to the Bath Festival Orchestra. It's a feast, with full-bodied takes on Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky and Haydn, not to mention guest solos by the likes of violinist Henryk Szeryng and cellist János Starker. ***Michael Beek***

Reviews Index

Thomas Adès
Five Spells from The Tempest 74
Inferno Suite 74
Luxury Suite from Powder Her Face 74
Timo Andres
The Blind Banister 76
JS Bach
Mass in B minor 82
Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004 (Trans. Viola) 72
Bartók
44 Duos for Two Violins 86
Allegro barbaro 90
Duke Bluebeard's Castle 80
Four Piano Pieces 90
Marche funèbre 90
Piano Sonata 90
Sonatina 90
Three Studies for Piano 90
Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 2 76
Violin Concerto 76
Berio Duetti for Two Violins 86
Daniel Blumberg The Brutalist 94
Brahms
Piano Quartets Nos 2 & 3 86
Britten Elegy for Solo Viola 72
Bruckner Motets etc 82
Symphony No. 9 74
Chopin Complete Waltzes 90
Dvořák Symphony No. 7 96
Eastman Symphony No. 2 74
Elgar In the South 75
The Kingdom 82
Symphony No. 1 75
Gesualdo Motets etc 82
Philip Glass
Once Within a Time 94
Greene Jeptha 83
Handel Sonatas for Violin and Basso Continuo 87
Jake Heggie
Before it all goes dark 80
Holst Beni Mora 96
Choral Symphony 96
Järnefelt Berceuse 76
Kabalevsky
Cello Concerto No. 2 77
Lehmann Songs 84
Lully Alceste 80
Noah Max String Quartets 88
Mozart Arias etc 85
Piano Sonata No. 4 87
Violin Sonata No. 25 etc 87
Prokofiev Symphony No. 6 75
Puccini Le Villi 81
Ravel Complete Songs 84
Complete Works for Solo Piano 90
Respighi Piano Works 92
Rorem Choral Works 83
Schubert Lieder etc 85
Robert Schumann
Cello Concerto in A minor 77
Caroline Shaw
in manus tuas 72
Howard Shore Suites and Themes from Film Scores 94
Shostakovich
Cello Concertos 77
Violin Concertos 77
Sibelius
Violin Concerto in D minor 76
Sondheim
Songs (arr. chamber) 88
R Strauss Salome 81
Szymanowski
Violin Concerto No. 2 76
Tchaikovsky
Symphony No. 2 74
Telemann
Fantasias Nos 1 & 7 (Trans Viola) 72
Vaughan Williams
The House of Life 96
Songs of Travel 96
Villa-Lobos
Complete Solo Guitar Works 91
Wagner
Der fliegender Holländer 81
Weinberg
String Quartets Nos 3, 9 & 14 87
John Williams The Reivers 94
Winterberg
Chamber Music 87
C Wood
Songs for Voice and Piano 85

COLLECTIONS
Abracadabra
Beatrice Berrut 92
Ancient Modernity
Louise McMonagle 92
An Eastern Trip Dimitri Maslennikov, Sabine Weyer 88
An English Pastoral
Chu-Yu Yang, Eric McElroy 88
Angel of Peace
The Sixteen/Harry Christophers 83
Antal Doráti in London, Vols 1 & 2
Various Artists 97
British Piano Concertos Simon Callaghan; BBC NOW et al 77
Concertos
Alexandre Tharaud et al 78
Dazzling Light Ensemble Altera/Christopher Lowrey 83
Fantasies
Zlatomir Fung, Richard Fu 88
Granada
Elsa Grether, Ferenc Vizi 89
Guarneri String Quartet – The Complete RCA Victor Collection
Guarneri String Quartet 97
Hollywood Gala: Award Night at the Symphony Danish National Symphony Orchestra et al 94
Italiana! The Philharmonic Brass/Riccardo Muti 75
Jelly d'Aranyi – Complete Columbia Recordings 1928-31
Jelly d'Aranyi et al 96
Kreisler plays Violin Concertos
Fritz Kreisler et al 96
Lines of Life
Benjamin Appl et al 85
Maestra Samantha Ege; Lontano Orchestra/Odaline de la Martinez 78
Michel Beroff – The Complete Erato Recordings Various Artists 97
Nielsen – The Historic Recordings
Various Artists 96
Preludes
Jan Lisiecki 92
Quartets Through a Time of Change Brother Tree Sound 88
Recorder Concertos from Sanssouci Isaac Makhdoomi et al 78
River of Fire
Cavatina Duo; Pacifica Quartet 89
Standby for Action! 2: Tunes of Danger Hackenbacker Orchestra 94
Sun Moon Stars Rain Phoenix Chorale/Christopher Gabbitas 83
Take Me to the Water
Ashley Jackson 92
Ukraine: A Piano Portrait
Margaret Fingerhut 92
Women Esther Abrami; Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra et al 78

Our expert *Chris Haslam* gives advice on buying the latest hi-fi equipment

How to bring listening pleasure to your desktop

Luxury workspace: the JBL 4305P Studio Monitor is at the top of the price range

The average UK employee will spend roughly 3,515 full days at work – that's 90,000 hours or one third of their time awake. What's more, around 63 per cent of us now work some of those long hours from home, which, by my loose calculations, means you owe it to yourself to upgrade the terrible speakers built into your laptop. In short, it's time to transform your home office listening with a pair of dedicated desktop speakers.

It's no surprise that ultra-thin laptops – just like the latest televisions – have poor audio. There's simply not enough space for proper speakers, and your enjoyment of audio, video, gaming and even Zoom calls suffers. A pair of stereo speakers, plugged into your laptop via USB, USB-C or 3.5mm headphone jack, or wirelessly using Bluetooth, will do wonderful things to the audio trapped in your computer. Even the cheapest design, such as the £30 Logitech Z150 and Creative Pebble V3, will be a serious improvement on the built-in speakers, but spend a little more and choose features that benefit how you work and listen to music, and you'll transform your home office into a personal listening room.

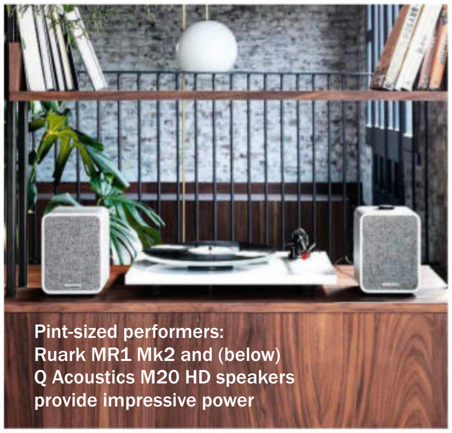
My focus here is with audio, specifically listening to music, so I'm ignoring surround sound-style speakers – often with subwoofers – aimed towards gaming and video. Instead, I'm focussing on the latest active stereo speakers that have amplification built-in. These are ideal to plug straight into your computer, stream wirelessly using Bluetooth and even play in high-resolution over Wi-Fi.

> It's time to transform your home office listening with dedicated desktop speakers

Unlike traditional bookshelf or standmount speakers, power is not as crucial, partly because home offices tend to be smaller rooms, but also because the speakers are designed to be positioned close to the listener. Rarely will you need more than 100 watts of power. The excellent **Q Acoustics M20 HD** (*£400; qacoustics.co.uk*) has 65 watts, while the award-winning **Ruark MR1 Mk2** (*£349; ruarkaudio.com*) has just 20 watts.

Positioning stereo desktop speakers is also key. Keep them at least 10cm away from the wall and around 60cm apart, and ideally angled slightly toward your seat position in an equilateral triangle. Lifting the tweeters up to ear level – either using dedicated stands or a couple of books – will help audio quality too. If you are planning on watching movies or gaming, it's best to stick to a wired rather than Bluetooth connection, as there will be some latency between the action on the screen and the sound reaching your ears.

The most basic desktop speaker will simply plug into the headphone socket on



Pint-sized performers: Ruark MR1 Mk2 and (below) Q Acoustics M20 HD speakers provide impressive power

your computer. But in the streaming age, the convenience of Bluetooth and Wi-Fi streaming is hard to overlook – and in truth, by using a smartphone and app, you may not need to plug into your laptop at all. But do remember that a wired connection using USB and USB-C can play the highest resolution recordings pulled from your hard drive or from services such as Tidal and Qobuz.

And it's also worth remembering that unless you've got a big budget – for something like the excellent **JBL 4305P Studio Monitor** (*£1,999; jbl.com*) – avoid paying for extra features you won't need, as it usually means less money being spent on the drivers and overall sound quality.

What to look for

Connectivity: Modern active speakers come with a range of inputs. Ideally choose the latest version (5.2 and above) of Bluetooth for the best audio and reliability, but for the best resolution look for Wi-Fi and a wired connection using USB. Some also come with RCA connections enabling you to plug in existing hi-fi components including CD player and turntable, but if it's the latter, remember that you might need a phono stage to boost output.

Studio monitors or hi-fi speakers?: Many desktop-sized speakers are designed for use in professional and home recording studios. These studio monitors are ideal for detailed, nearfield listening, but be aware that they are tuned to have a neutral, balanced sound profile to help mix with accuracy. With no emphasis on low or high frequencies, they can lack the warmth and richness of more hi-fi-orientated speakers.

We recommend...

Great all-rounders: Kanto Audio ORA4 speakers are highly versatile; (below) Audio Technica AT-SP3X; (bottom) Kef LSX II LT

Kanto Audio ORA4 £399

At just 21cm tall, these are deceptively small for studio-style reference monitors, but they've still managed to impress me with their accuracy, power and balance, not to mention impressive connectivity. These DSP-(digital signal processing) tuned, 70W bi-amped monitors have Bluetooth, USB-C input supporting 24-bit/96kHz for hi-res playback and the bonus of an RCA line-in that enables you to plug in any analog hi-fi gear – I enjoyed being able to swap quickly between my office turntable and desktop streaming. Being reference monitors, designed for audio engineers and mixing, they have a very neutral sound, but don't mistake that for being boring. If anything, especially when listening to a live concert, it's great at recreating the detail, complexity and scale of the orchestra. **kantoaudio.com**

Audio Technica AT-SP3X £169

These 20cm-tall retro-style speakers from Audio Technica can be connected to your computer or hi-fi via dual RCA jacks or wirelessly using Bluetooth 5.3 technology. They feature 30 watts of power, a 3" woofer and 1.1" tweeter with a small, but effective bass reflex port at the rear. They're simple to use, easy to set up and will give your offices an instant audio upgrade. The main 'master' speaker has the control buttons and connects to the 'slave' speaker using 2m of basic speaker cable. It feels a little rudimentary for 2025, but works fine here and the Bluetooth connection from my laptop and my Bluetooth-enabled turntable was strong and consistent. **audio-technica.com**

Kef LSX II LT £899

It's a lot to pay, but these active wireless speakers will bring joy to the nine-to-five routine. With 100 watts of Class D amplification, the 24cm-tall design is powerful enough for most home offices and the Uni-Q coaxial driver array (where the tweeter is mounted in the center of the driver) does wonderful things to music. With dual Wi-Fi, USB-C, optical, ethernet and even a HDMI ARC port for TV connectivity, they're impressively connected and can play hi-res quality (up to 24bit/384kHz) from almost any source. There's no analogue input, though, so you can't connect a turntable. Connected via USB-C and using Qobuz Hi-Res recordings, the speakers provide a remarkable level of detail even at low volumes, while the presentation and scale of any performance is as thrilling as it is, admittedly, distracting while I work. **kef.com**

TV&Radio

Your guide to what's on BBC Radio 3 this month, plus TV highlights

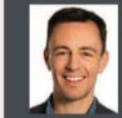
JUNE'S RADIO 3 LISTINGS

Schedules may be subject to alteration. For up-to-date listings see BBC Sounds and iPlayer

Three to look out for

Aldeburgh Festival

Festive fun: Aldeburgh packs in the premieres



Sam Jackson, the controller of BBC Radio 3, selects three programme highlights for the month of June

Aldeburgh Festival

BBC Radio 3's annual pilgrimage brings four concerts from Snape Maltings, packed with premieres and featuring festival artists – tenor Allan Clayton, violinist Leila Josefowicz, and composers Helen Grime and Daniel Kidane alongside the BBC Symphony Orchestra and BBC Singers.
Radio 3 In Concert, Mon 23 to Thurs 26 June, 7.30pm

Peter Grimes

Donald Macleod introduces Welsh National Opera's new production of Britten's iconic drama, with tenor Nicky Spence in the title role alongside Sally Matthews and Sarah Connolly, and the awesome spectacle of WNO's acclaimed chorus. There's passion, violence and desperation but there are no outright heroes or villains in this compelling take on the opera.
Opera on 3, Saturday 21 June, 6pm

New Music Biennial

Bradford, the 2025 UK City of Culture, plays host to genre-busting new music from some of the country's most exciting composers, performed by sensational musicians, plus bespoke commissions for everything from solo electronic artists to full symphony orchestra.
New Music Show, Saturday 14 June, 10.30pm

1 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1.30pm Private Passions
1.30-3pm Music Map
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm The Early Music Show
6-7.15pm Words and Music
7.15-8pm Sunday Feature
8-9pm Brass Banding
9-10pm 20th Century Radicals
10-11.30pm Ultimate Calm
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

2 MONDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall
2-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Bizet
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from City Halls, Glasgow. Brahms *Variations on a theme by Haydn,* Beethoven *Piano Concerto No.3,* Haydn *Nelson Mass.* Yeol Eum Son (pf), Anna Dennis (sop), Katie Bray (mez), Anthony Gregory (ten), Neal Davies (bar), Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Chorus/ Maxim Emelyanychev
9.45-10pm The Essay An Actor's Life: Kenneth Cranham
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

3 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Bizet
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Barbican, London. Boulanger *Psaume 130: Du fond de l'abîme,* MacMillan *Three Interludes from 'The Sacrifice',* Prokofiev *Romeo & Juliet (excerpts).* BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus/Dima Slobodeniouk
9.45-10pm The Essay An Actor's Life: Kenneth Cranham
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

4 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-3pm Classical Live
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Composer of the Week Bizet
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Symphony Hall, Birmingham. Bartók *Violin Concerto No. 1,* Mahler *Symphony No. 5.* James Ehnes (violin), BBC NOW/Ryan Bancroft
9.45-10pm The Essay An Actor's Life: Kenneth Cranham
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

5 THURSDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Bizet
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Watkins *Concerto for Orchestra,* Strauss *An Alpine Symphony.* Hallé /Mark Elder
9.45-10pm The Essay An Actor's Life: Kenneth Cranham
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

6 FRIDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Bizet
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Friday Night is Music Night
9.45-10pm The Essay An Actor's Life: Kenneth Cranham
10-11.30pm Late Junction
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

7 SATURDAY

6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast
9am-12noon Saturday Morning
12-1pm Earlier... with Jools Holland
1-2pm Music Matters Knowing the Score
2-4pm Record Review
4-5pm Sound of Cinema
5-6pm This Classical Life
6-9.30pm Opera on 3
9.30-10.30pm Music Planet
10.30pm-12.30am New Music Show

8 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1.30pm Private Passions
1.30-3pm Music Map
3-4pm Choral Evensong

Passion and violence: Nicky Spence stars as Peter Grimes in Welsh National Opera's new production of Britten's opera

4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm The Early Music Show
6-7.15pm Words and Music
7.15-8pm Between the Ears Under the Closed Flower
8-9pm Brass Banding
9-10pm 20th Century Radicals
10-11.30pm Ultimate Calm
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

9 MONDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall
2-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Fanny Hensel
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool. Beethoven *Symphony No. 6*, Janáček *Glagolitic Mass*. Evelina Dobračeva (sop), Katarina Karnéus (mez), Ladislav Elgr (ten), Jan Martiník (bass), Daniel Greenway (organ), RLPO and Chorus/Dinis Sousa
9.45-10pm The Essay Instrumental
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

10 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Fanny Hensel
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Ulster Hall, Belfast. Carwithen *Bishop Rock*, Walton *Cello Concerto*, Shostakovich *Symphony No. 5*. Nicolas Altstaedt (cello), Ulster Orchestra/Dinis Sousa
9.45-10pm The Essay Instrumental
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

11 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-3pm Classical Live
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Composer of the Week Fanny Hensel
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Royal Festival Hall, London. Ravel *Alborada del gracioso*, Rachmaninov *Piano Concerto No. 3*, Ravel *La valse*, Respighi *Pines of Rome*. Nikolai Lugansky (piano), Philharmonia/Santtu-Matias Rouvali
9.45-10pm The Essay Instrumental
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

12 THURSDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Fanny Hensel
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Hoddinott Hall, Cardiff. Mozart *Overture: Le nozze di Figaro*, Widmann *Violin Concerto No. 2*, Mendelssohn *Symphony No. 5, 'Reformation'*. Carolin Widmann (violin), BBC NOW/Jörg Widmann
9.45-10pm The Essay Instrumental
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

13 FRIDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Fanny Hensel
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Friday Night is Music Night
9.45-10pm The Essay Instrumental
10-11.30pm Late Junction
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

14 SATURDAY

6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast
9am-12noon Saturday Morning
12-1pm Earlier… with Jools Holland
1-2pm Music Matters Knowing the Score
2-4pm Record Review
4-5pm Sound of Cinema
5-6pm This Classical Life
6-9.30pm Opera on 3
9.30-10.30pm Music Planet
CHOICE 10.30pm-12.30am New Music Show

15 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1.30pm Private Passions
1.30-3pm Music Map
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm The Early Music Show
6-7.15pm Words and Music
7.15-8pm Between the Ears Into the Dark
8-9pm Brass Banding
9-10pm 20th Century Radicals
10-11pm Ultimate Calm
11-11.30pm Night Tracks Mix
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

16 MONDAY

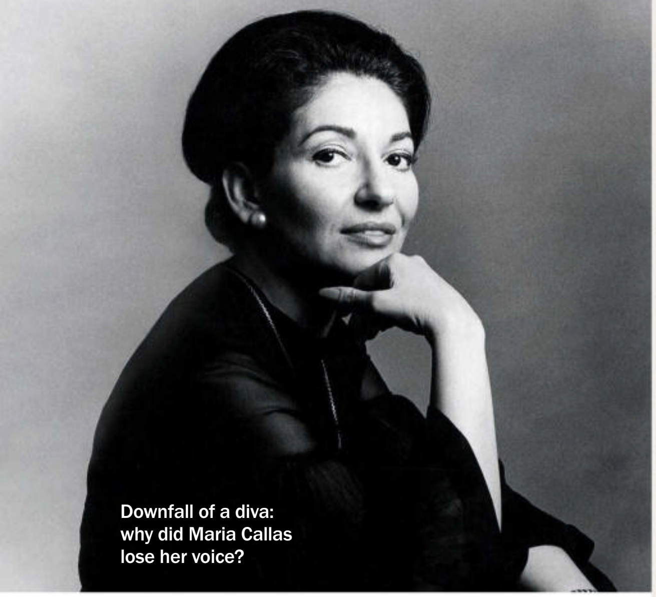
6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall
2-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Palestrina
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Symphony Hall, Birmingham. Mendelssohn *Overture: A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Wagner *Wesendonck Lieder*, Panufnik *Alma's Songs Without Words*, Mendelssohn *Symphony No. 4*. Jamie Barton (mez), CBSO/Pierre Bleuse
9.45-10pm The Essay Unsung Heroes
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

17 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Palestrina
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Barbican, London. Strauss *Till Eulenspiegel*, Mozart *Violin Concerto No. 5*, Strauss

GETTY

June TV&Radio



Downfall of a diva: why did Maria Callas lose her voice?

TV CHOICE
Maria Callas: The Final Act

Soprano Maria Callas's impact on classical music was truly revolutionary, bringing forgotten roles into the limelight and transforming them into magnificent, indomitable heroines. This new *Arena* film celebrates the great classical diva, known for her glamour and temper as much as her iconic voice… one which tragically could not last. So, why did Callas lose her voice? Director Clare Beavan argues that it's time to deconstruct the myth that her downward spiral was due to her liaison with billionaire Aristotle Onassis. The real tragedy is that her voice went far earlier than people think – a musicologist has shown that her fatal 'wobble' was actually detectable in her earliest performances. With exclusive archive material and admirers including Richard Bonynge, Simon Schama, Nadine Benjamin and Rob Rinder, this is the powerful story of Maria Callas as never told before.

BBC iPlayer, available now

Ein Heldenleben. Lisa Batiashvili (violin), LSO/Antonio Pappano

9.45-10pm Essay Unsung Heroes

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

18 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-3pm Classical Live

3-4pm Choral Evensong

4-5pm Composer of the Week Palestrina

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

7.30-9.45pm In Concert

9.45-10pm Essay Unsung Heroes

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

19 THURSDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-4pm Classical Live

4-5pm Composer of the Week Palestrina

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Works by Beethoven, Abrahamsen & Chin. BBC Phil/Elena Schwarz

9.45-10pm The Essay Unsung Heroes

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

20 FRIDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-4pm Classical Live

4-5pm Composer of the Week Palestrina

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

7.30-9.45pm Friday Night is Music Night

9.45-10pm The Essay Unsung Heroes

10-11.30pm Late Junction

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

21 SATURDAY

6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast

9am-12noon Saturday Morning

12-1pm Earlier… with Jools Holland

1-2pm Music Matters Knowing the Score

2-4pm Record Review

4-5pm Sound of Cinema

5-6pm This Classical Life

CHOICE 6-9.30pm Opera on 3 from Welsh National Opera. Britten *Peter Grimes*

9.30-10.30pm Music Planet

10.30pm-12.30am New Music

22 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast

9am-12pm Sunday Morning

12-1.30pm Private Passions

1.30-3pm Music Map

3-4pm Choral Evensong

4-5pm Jazz Record Requests

5-6pm The Early Music Show

6-7.15pm Words and Music

7.15-8pm Sunday Feature The February House

8-9pm Brass Banding

9-10pm 20th Century Radicals

10-11pm Ultimate Calm

11-11.30pm Night Tracks Mix

11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

23 MONDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall

2-4pm Classical Live

4-5pm Composer of the Week Gavin Bryars

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

CHOICE 7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Snape Maltings. Works by Kidane, Grime, Strauss. Anu Komsi (sop), Leila Josefowicz (vn), BBC SO/Sakari Oramo

9.45-10pm The Essay

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

24 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-4pm Classical Live

4-5pm Composer of the Week Gavin Bryars

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

CHOICE 7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Snape Maltings. Works by Grime, Britten, Elias & Sibelius. Allan Clayton (ten), Ben Goldscheider (horn), BBC SO/Sakari Oramo

9.45-10pm The Essay

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

25 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-3pm Classical Live

3-4pm Choral Evensong

4-5pm Composer of the Week Gavin Bryars

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

CHOICE 7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Snape Maltings. Works by Barber, Grimes, Matthews, Shostakovich. Leila Josefowicz (vn), Huw Watkins (pf), Paul Watkins (vc)

9.45-10pm The Essay

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

26 THURSDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-4pm Classical Live

4-5pm Composer of the Week Gavin Bryars

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

CHOICE 7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Snape Maltings. Works by Musgrave, Britten, Palestrina, Kidane, Schoenberg & Poulenc. BBC Singers/Owain Park

9.45-10pm The Essay

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

27 FRIDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-4pm Classical Live

4-5pm Composer of the Week Gavin Bryars

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

7.30-9.45pm Friday Night is Music Night

9.45-10pm The Essay

10-11.30pm Late Junction

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

28 SATURDAY

6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast

9am-12noon Saturday Morning

12-1pm Earlier… with Jools Holland

1-2pm Music Matters 25 for 25: Sounds of the Century

2-4pm Record Review

4-5pm Sound of Cinema

5-6pm This Classical Life

6-9.30pm Opera on 3

9.30-10.30pm Music Planet

10.30pm-12.30am New Music

29 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast

9am-12pm Sunday Morning

12-1.30pm Private Passions

1.30-3pm Music Map

3-4pm Choral Evensong

4-5pm Jazz Record Requests

5-6pm The Early Music Show

6-7.15pm Words and Music

7.15-8pm Sunday Feature The Hiawatha Phenomenon

8-9pm Brass Banding

9-10pm 20th Century Radicals

10-11pm Ultimate Calm

11-11.30pm Night Tracks Mix

30 MONDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall

2-4pm Classical Live

4-5pm Composer of the Week Satie

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Glasshouse, Gateshead. Works by Schubert, Berlioz & Mozart. Royal Northern Sinfonia/Riccardo Minasi

9.45-10pm The Essay

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

QUIZ ANSWERS from p 104

1. a) Bedřich Smetana; b) Michael Tippett; c) Sergei Prokofiev
2. Pierre Beaumarchais
3. a) *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; b) *Lohengrin*; c) Organ Symphony No. 5
4. Seven
5. Henry Purcell
6. *Wedding at Troldhaugen*
7. George Frideric Handel
8. a) Hector Berlioz; b) Carl Nielsen; c) Doreen Carwithen
9. Pieter Bruegel the Elder
10. *The Godfather*

GETTY

VISIT **WWW.CLASSICAL-MUSIC.COM** FOR THE VERY LATEST FROM THE MUSIC WORLD

CRUISE COLLECTIVE | Celebrity Cruises®

Set sail for an unforgettable eclipse adventure

TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE - AUGUST 12, 2026

Embark on a 14-night Mediterranean cruise with Celebrity Cruises, departing from Southampton on 1 August 2026. Indulge in luxurious accommodations, world-class dining, and captivating entertainment as you explore some of the most beautiful destinations in Spain and Portugal while witnessing a rare total solar eclipse at sea.

Prepare to experience the eclipse with unobstructed views, minimal light pollution, and the flexibility to adjust course for optimal weather conditions aboard the Celebrity Apex.

Exclusive Offer

INFINITE VERANDA £3,115 per person*

OCEAN VIEW £2,758 per person*

DELUXE INSIDE £2,483 per person*

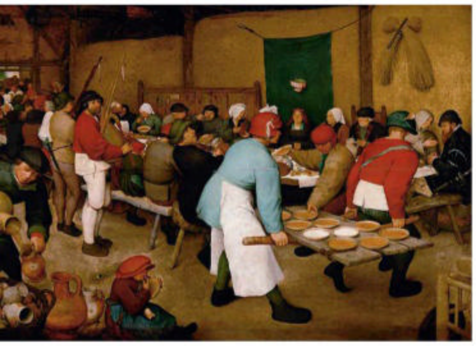
CALL **0344 472 0202** AND QUOTE THE CODE **CCSOLAR26** TO LOCK IN THIS EXCLUSIVE OFFER

*All prices include gratuities. T&Cs apply.

Outdoor lounge on the magic carpet, Celebrity APEX

Celebrity APEX

Celebrity APEX



THE QUIZ

This month's questions will keep you fully engaged...

1. Who composed the following wedding-related operas: a) *The Bartered Bride* (1866); b) *The Midsummer Marriage* (1955); c) *Betrothal in a Monastery* (1946)?

2. Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* is based on a comedy by which playwright?

3. From which larger works are these traditional wedding favourites taken: a) Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March'; b) Wagner's 'Bridal Chorus'; c) Widor's Toccata?

4. Still in her wedding dress, how many large doors greet Judith when she enters Duke Bluebeard's Castle in Bartók's opera?

5. For many years, Jeremiah Clarke's *Prince of Denmark's March* – also known as the 'Trumpet Voluntary' and a regular choice for the entry of the bride – was wrongly attributed to which composer?

6. Which lively piano work did Grieg write in 1896 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of his and wife Nina's nuptials?

7. Who composed *Il Parnasso in festa, per il sponsali di Teti e Peleo* (Parnassus in celebration of the nuptials of Thetis and Peleus) for the wedding of Anne, Princess Royal in 1734?

8. Which composers married the following: a) actress Harriet Smithson (1833); b) sculptor Anne Marie Brodersen (1891); c) composer William Alwyn (1975)?

9. Featuring two musicians playing the *pijpzak*, *The Peasant Wedding* (above) is a 1567 painting by whom?

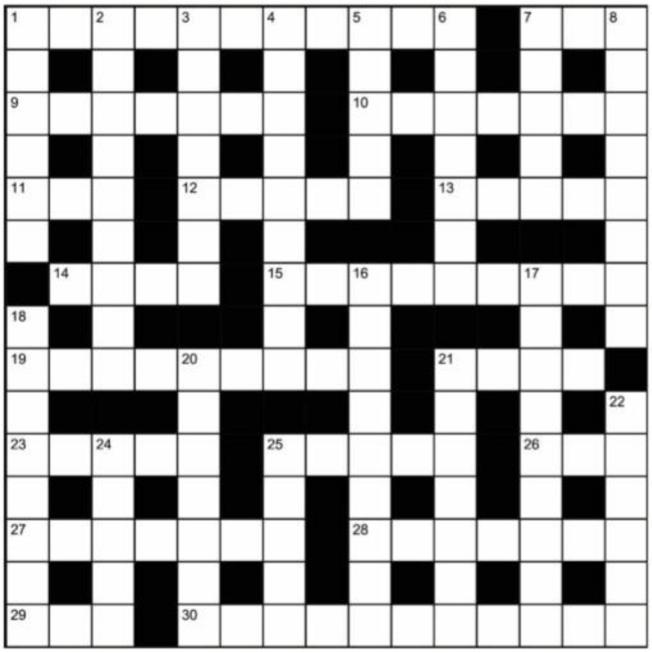
10. In which classic 1972 film do guests take turns to sing the comic song 'C'è la luna mezzo mare' at the wedding reception of Connie and Carlo?

See p102 for answers

The *BBC Music Magazine* PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 412

Crossword set by **Paul Henderson**

The first correct solution of our crossword picked at random will win an exclusive **BBC Music Magazine Coffee Mug** (not available to purchase). To enter, send answers to: *BBC Music Magazine*, Crossword 412/ June 2025, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA to arrive by 12 June 2025 (solution in September 2025 issue).



Your name & address ....

....

....

....

....

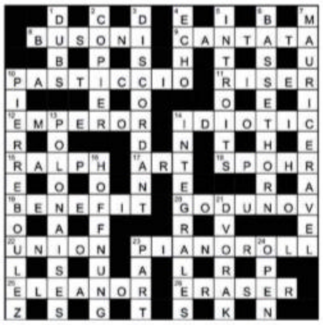
ACROSS

1 Secondary character's formal aria mostly in surroundings of Italian lake (11)
7 Arrangement of bells from composer Chilcott, say (3)
9 Note Frosch, perhaps, returning in a new style? (7)
10 I ruined zip in trouser part in Gewandhaus location (7)
11 Record label, European, I'm backing (3)
12 Soprano Mitchell recalled a Christmas song (5)
13 Opening in Berlin – *Trovatore* (5)
14 English composer of musicals offering twentieth reference point in score? (4)
15 A reversal of Crosby's heart and Crosby is engrossing (9)
19 Quantities of music to draw English soprano (9)
21 Love for Italy reflected in piece by 7 down (4)
23 A section of requiem in ordinary sort of scale (5)
25 Company unhappy after reversing order in closing moments (5)
26 Carnival city foremost in work of 27? (3)
27 English composer tense after bass interrupts Debussy piece (7)
28 Amendment ignoring volume recalled with increasing volume (7)
29 Haydn gutted about end of innovative symphony of his? (3)
30 Work by 7 down revised with leaner lines? (11)

DOWN

1 7 down's motorists (6)
2 Crazy, crazy girls penning American partsongs (9)
3 Bellringer upset about a further ration? (7)
4 Light orchestra conductor – chap on a TV, I fancy (9)
5 Sound of drum presented by a composer from Italy (5)
6 Major actor, one investing in 14's greatest hit (7)
7 Composer's zeal 50 per cent reduced in short time (5)
8 British view of works from 7 down? Crikey! (2,6)
16 Position taken about recording Dolin's initial fancy footwork (4-5)
17 Total engagement: minims or breve ultimately subject to change (9)
18 Opera by 7 down held up – stoppage I observed internally (8)
20 English composer about to engage in clean lines (7)
21 Italian composer, one ruling in Paris, penning various 'sins' (7)
22 Fake story about our Russian composer (6)
24 What's framed by many, many a composer (5)
25 Initially contralto and tenor engaged readily to provide entertainment (5)

MARCH SOLUTION
No. 409



MARCH WINNER

Sue Brown, Northampton

Our Media, publisher of *BBC Music Magazine*, may contact you with details of our products and/or to undertake research. Please write 'Do Not Contact' if you prefer not to receive such information by post or phone. Please write your email address on your postcard if you prefer to receive such information by e-mail.

We abide by IPSO's rules and regulations. To give feedback about our magazines, please visit ourmedia.co.uk/policies or write to the editor at the address above (opposite, top right)

Please note: Because of *BBC Music Magazine*'s limited office access, there may be a delay in receiving your prize. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

BBC Proms
BBC Proms

NEXT MONTH on sale from 12 June (UK)

Let the Proms begin!

We welcome the world's greatest classical music festival with full concert listings, plus our highlights of the exciting season ahead

Much-missed violinist: Laura Samuel led the BBC Scottish Symphony

On your FREE CD

Mozart *Requiem*; Vaughan Williams *Lark Ascending*

Performed by BBC Scottish Symphony & BBC Singers, featuring Laura Samuel

PLUS! Conductor ***Rafael Payare*** speaks exclusively to *Clive Paget*; *Jeremy Pound* investigates the painful history of the ***castrato***; *Peter Somerford* explores the ways in which ***music can heal***; *Abigail Frymann Rouch* looks at ***choirs working in prisons***; and ***Henriëtte Bosmans*** is our July issue *Composer of the Month*

Competition terms and conditions Winners will be the senders of the first correct entries drawn at random. All entrants are deemed to have accepted the rules (see opposite) and agreed to be bound by them. The prizes shall be as stated and no cash alternatives will be offered. Competitions are open to UK residents only, except employees of Our Media Company Limited, the promoter and their agents. No purchase necessary. Only one entry per competition per person. Proof of postage is not proof of entry. Our Media Company Limited accepts no responsibility for entries lost or damaged in the post. Entrants agree to take part in any publicity related to these competitions. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Entrants' personal details will not be used by Our Media Company Limited, publisher of *BBC Music Magazine*, for any other purpose than for contacting competition winners.

GETTY

ourmedia

Volume 33 No.9 *BBC Music Magazine* (ISSN 0966-7180) (USPS 018-168) is published 13 times a year by Our Media Ltd under licence from BBC Worldwide, Eagle House, Bristol BS1 4ST, UK.

© Our Media Ltd, 2025

Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 3XT. Not for resale. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction in whole or part is prohibited without written permission. Every effort has been made to secure permission for copyright material. In the event of any material being used inadvertently, or where it proved impossible to trace the copyright owner, acknowledgement will be made in a future issue. MSS, photographs and artwork are accepted on the basis that *BBC Music Magazine* and its agents do not accept liability for loss or damage to same. Views expressed are not necessarily those of t he publisher. ISSN 0966-7180. GST Registration No. 898993548RT

Distributed in the US by NPS Media Group, 74 Winthrop St, Suite #6, Augusta, ME 04330. Periodicals postage paid at Augusta, ME and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BBC MUSIC, Immediate Media PO Box 401 Williamsport, PA 17703

Our Media Company is working to ensure that all of its paper comes from well-managed, FSC®-certified forests and other controlled sources. This magazine is printed on Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) certified paper. This magazine can be recycled, for use in newspapers and packaging. Please remove any gifts, samples or wrapping and dispose of them at your local collection point.

Subscriptions and back numbers. Faulty CDs

Online subscriptions
classical-music.com
Subscription prices for one year (13 issues): UK £77.87 Europe/Eire £82.99 US $99 Canada $131.40 Rest of World £84.99

UK, Europe, Rest of World
BBC Music Magazine, 3 Queensbridge, Northampton, NN4 7BF, UK
Orders/enquiries/back issues
Tel: **03330 162 119**
Tel (Europe): **+44 1604 973 721**
Web: **ourmediashop.com/contactus**

US/Canada, Online subscriptions
Orders/enquiries/back issues
Immediate Media PO Box 401 Williamsport, PA 17703
Toll-free order line: **1-888-941-5623**
Web: **ourmediashop.com/contactus**

South Africa
BBC Music Service, Jacklin Enterprises, Private Bag 6, CENTURION, 0046
For sales prices:
Tel (+27) 011 265 4303;
Fax (+27) 011 314 2984;
Web: **ourmediashop.com/contactus**

Music that changed me

Anna Lapwood

Organist, conductor

Anna Lapwood has given organ music a major boost with her viral TikTok videos and unlikely but brilliant transcriptions for the instrument. The multi-talented British artist, who is soon to turn 30, recently stepped down as music director at Pembroke College, Cambridge, to concentrate on her solo career. Her new album, *Firedove*, is out on Sony Classical on 30 May.

I came to the organ quite late, and I didn't fall in love with it for a long time. There's a chunk of my life, from about 15-18, that was all about orchestral music; I was playing harp in the National Youth Orchestra and in the Royal Academy of Music Symphony Orchestra. I remember an activation in my brain around that time with things like Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* Overture, **BRITTEN**'s *Four Sea Interludes* – I'll never forget playing them for the first time – and Shostakovich's Fifth with that amazing harp solo at the end of the slow movement. I thought I was going to become an orchestral harpist; then I found the organ. I wrote a transcription of the *Four Sea Interludes* for organ during the first Covid lockdown. It was a big moment, because it was the first time I'd really explored playing music that I wanted to play for my own sake, as opposed to music I was being told to play.

My first organ teacher asked me, 'What's your favourite key?' and I said 'E minor'. I completely disagree with my answer now. E Minor is the worst key! He said, 'Great, here's the **BACH** E minor Prelude and Fugue.' It's very hard, and I didn't learn it very well and still can't play it, because I learned it badly when I first did it, but it made me realise what it is to play a piece like that on the organ – the feeling of all the parts dovetailing and dancing the melodies with your feet.

GETTY

'I noticed people were surprised that this kick-ass female organist was so good'

When I'd only just taken up the organ, I went on the Oxford and Cambridge Organ Scholar Experience, which is more fun than it sounds. There was this kick-ass older female organist there, and she played the **EUGÈNE GIGOUT** Toccata in the last concert. She absolutely smashed it, and everyone said, 'That was incredible!' I remember noticing that people seemed surprised that she had smashed it, as a female organist. I went home, found the music online, sat at my piano and started learning that piece. I still play it every now and then, and it always makes me think back to that moment.

I feel a very strong affinity with **HANS ZIMMER**'s music, and it works incredibly well on the organ. 'Cornfield Chase' from *Interstellar* marked an important moment for me with the instrument, because I just messed around and figured out how to play it for fun, posted it on TikTok and it went mad. Then I worked out a proper transcription. I think I genuinely hadn't realised until that point that it was an option to play that kind of music on the organ. I remember hearing 'Chevaliers de Sangreal' for the first time when I watched *The Da Vinci Code* with my parents. That evening, I took my headphones, manuscript paper and a torch to bed, and I sat under the covers trying to work out the harmony. It sounds nerdy, but I wanted to know how he did it, and I realised that it's all about texture. The harmony is part of it, but it's about how you build textures on top of it. So now I've done an organ transcription of that as well.

People assume that if you're playing a film score transcription it's easy. The notes are one thing, but it's also the console management, the registration. Someone recently said to me that I'm a virtuoso at registering. That was the biggest compliment that anyone has ever paid me! I spend such a long time sitting there and setting a *crescendo*, with 50 generals if I need to, to try and get it so smooth that you barely notice it happening. That's where the real challenges are in that kind of transcription; my life would be a lot easier if I just played Bach the whole time!

I don't think I figured out who I was as a conductor at Pembroke College for a couple of years. When I first arrived, I was 21 and it was all about putting on this mask of being confident and authoritative. I'm surprised the choir didn't just roll their eyes and walk out. **ELEANOR DALEY**'s *Upon Your Heart* was the first piece by a female composer that I conducted. I remember thinking, 'This is quite beautiful!' I'm ashamed to say I was surprised; I don't know what that says about the musical world at that time. That kickstarted the next eight years of my time at Pembroke, which were all about creating equality in the standard repertoire. It has been such an amazing way to get to know fantastic new music which really deserves to be heard. I learned with the choir what it meant to be a conductor, and how to make them want to strive for themselves, instead of for me. It's about nurturing them as individuals and that leads to better music-making. *Interview by Michael Beek*

This was Sylvia's promise to you...

A generation ago, a woman named Sylvia made a promise. As a doctor's secretary, she'd watched stroke destroy the lives of so many people. She was determined to make sure we could all live in a world where we're far less likely to lose our lives to stroke.

She kept her promise, and a gift to the Stroke Association was included in her Will. Sylvia's gift helped fund the work that made sure many more of us survive stroke now than did in her lifetime.

Sylvia changed the story for us all. Now it's our turn to change the story for those who'll come after us.

Stroke still shatters lives and tears families apart. And for so many survivors the road to recovery is still long and desperately lonely. If you or someone you love has been affected by stroke – you'll know just what that means.

But it doesn't have to be like this. You can change the story, just like Sylvia did, with a gift in your Will. All it takes is a promise.

You can promise future generations a world where researchers discover new treatments and surgeries and every single stroke survivor has the best care, rehabilitation and support network possible, to help them rebuild their lives.

Will you make that promise to generations to come? Please, leave a gift in your Will to the Stroke Association.

Find out how by calling 020 7566 1505
or email legacy@stroke.org.uk
or visit stroke.org.uk/legacy

Rebuilding lives after stroke

The Stroke Association is registered as a charity in England and Wales (No 211015) and in Scotland (SC037789). Also registered in the Isle of Man (No. 945) and Jersey (NPO 369), and operating as a charity in Northern Ireland.

Stroke
Association

AMADEUS RIVA

AMADEUS
RIVER CRUISES

EXCLUSIVE
£50 pp
ONBOARD
CREDIT

DEFINING THE ART OF

Luxury River Cruising

Luxury river travel isn't what we do, it's who we are. Built on our family's deep passion for creating exceptional and immersive experiences, we have followed European rivers and waterways for more than 40 years connecting countries and cultures.

Book by **12th June 2025** to enjoy an exclusive onboard credit of £50 per person with promo code **AMADEUS**

CLASSICAL DANUBE **7 nights from £1,999 pp**

Explore grand capitals like Vienna, Budapest, and Bratislava. Witness hidden gems like Wachau winerie, rustic Hungary, and the breathtaking natural beauty in between. **Inclusive of:** Return UK flights and overseas transfers; full board gourmet dining; beer, wine and soft drinks included with lunch and dinner; complimentary WIFI and bottled water, coffee and tea available 24 hours a day.

2026 ON SALE NOW: BOOK BY 30TH NOVEMBER 2025 TO SAVE 15% EARLY BOOKING DISCOUNT

For more or information or to book visit
www.amadeus-rivercruises.com.uk
call **0 800 035 6411**
or contact your preferred travel agent.

Based on 28th March 2026 departure, in double occupancy. Price includes early booking discount if booked by 30th November 2025. Price differs dependant on departure date. Solo pricing on request. Offers subject to availability. Full Terms and Conditons apply.